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THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
LAURENCE STERNE

BOOKS
BY
THE SAME AUTHOR

The Development of the English Novel.

The History of Henry Fielding.

The Works of Laurence Sterne (Editor).



Laurence Sterne

*From a mezzotint engraving by Edward Fisher
after the first portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds*

THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
LAURENCE STERNE
BY
WILBUR L. CROSS

*Sterling Professor of English & Dean of the
Graduate School in Yale University*

A NEW EDITION

*In which are included Many Letters never before printed
With Reproductions of the Original Manuscripts*

VOLUME ONE



NEW HAVEN
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T H E P R E F A C E

MY interest in Laurence Sterne, apart from his two main books, began in 1904 when I edited the Works of the humorist and his Life by Percy Fitzgerald. The publishers gave me a free hand to bring together all the letters and minor writings of Sterne, whether in print or in manuscript, that could be discovered within a reasonable period. This edition of Sterne's Works, though time has since proved it to be incomplete, contained many new letters and the unpublished "Journal to Eliza"—the emotional background to *A Sentimental Journey*.

Fitzgerald's *Life of Laurence Sterne*, which I edited with the permission of the author, was a pioneer book written by a young man midway in the Victorian age, and afterwards revised on the acquisition of important manuscripts by the British Museum. Subsequently Sir Sidney Lee contributed to the *Dictionary of National Biography* an admirable sketch of Sterne, to which I was greatly indebted at the beginning of my studies. It soon became clear, however, that many old errors about Sterne (some of them capital errors) still persisted; and there were also indications of letters and documents in existence which would enlighten the obscure places in Sterne's career and thus assist to a better understanding of the man and his works. I was curious to find out what I could. The book I then wrote (which was published by the Macmillan Company in 1909) was named *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, after an old fashion for similar biographies that aim to give not only the personal history of a man but also some account of his

friends, in accordance with the maxim that a man is known by the company he keeps.

The next year came Walter Sichel's *Sterne* bearing a London imprint. A second biography of Sterne within a few months led to a lively controversy in the London *Saturday Review* over where the second man got his materials on such short order. To describe the process, Percy Fitzgerald, who began the bloodless fray, invented the word "Sichelise." "This system of Sichelising," said Mr. Fitzgerald, "seems a simple and easy one. Find out the old and original biographies in which the spade work has been done, dates explored and fixed, original letters collected; take the materials and expatiate on them. Then take care to approach as from an entirely new point of view, as though you had made discoveries." At the same time Lewis Melville was writing a preface to still another biography of the humorist under the title of *The Life and Letters of Laurence Sterne*. This was a biography on a quite different pattern, wherein a large number of Sterne's letters were arranged in their chronological order, with preliminary essays and connecting links. It was the author's plan to let Sterne speak, whenever possible, in his own words, which, all must agree, are "infinitely better" than the words of anyone else. He owed "something," he said, to a recent "American biographer," but his chief reliance had been upon Sir Sidney Lee and others who had previously cultivated the Sterne domain.

Since my biography of Sterne, thus closely followed by two others, first appeared, many new facts about the humorist and his writings have been uncovered and many unpublished letters have escaped from the seclusion of private collections. It was, for example, while engaged upon Fielding that I met with Sterne's *Unknown World* in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, where the poem was printed under the initials of his own name. No one but a biographer can quite appreciate the

pleasure occasioned by a discovery, of minor importance though it was, that settled the question of disputed authorship. And a similar pleasure was awakened by the sight of numerous new letters in Sterne's own hand, unmutilated by editors. Moreover, there was published in 1923 *Mrs. Montagu, Queen of the Blues*, under the editorship of Mr. Reginald Blunt, containing a number of interesting letters that passed between the Bluestocking and Sterne, his wife (who was her cousin), and Lydia (who was her godchild). In the light of all new knowledge, I have gone through the first edition of my Life of Sterne, which has been out of print for several years, re-phrasing for accuracy of statement, and incorporating the fresh material. In the process, I have visualized Sterne's career once more, as may be seen in the "character" I have drawn of him. The result is the present work.

The title should be sufficient warning to the reader not to look for a series of essays on the different aspects of Sterne's humor, or elaborate comparisons between Sterne and the humorists before and since his time. "Books do not live," Augustine Birrell has aptly remarked, "by comparisons, but by their pleasure-giving qualities." On the temper of Sterne's art and style, we have already ample disquisitions from Bagehot, Traill, and Watts-Dunton, not to mention briefer critical opinions from Thackeray, Coleridge, and Carlyle. Of his influence upon his own and other literatures I once published a brief sketch; and others, before and after, have written on various phases of that influence in France, Germany, and Italy, with less attention to England. It yet remains for some one to make, in justice to Sterne, a comprehensive study of this subject for the benefit of the world of letters. But such a study, were it at all adequate, would require of itself a volume. Though I have often quoted what was written of Sterne after his death, and have commented upon his rare

qualities as literary artist, my main purpose has been biographical.

As the best way to depict a most singular character, I have employed “the direct method of scrupulous narration” rather than the “subtle strategy” that has come into vogue again since the Great War, of sudden and unexpected attack upon the flank or the rear, as if a biographer’s attitude towards his victim should be altogether hostile. It seems quite unfair not to allow a dead man to speak for himself with such words as he may have left behind him in defence of the kind of life he once lived. Had I any motive to represent Sterne otherwise than he was, I should be disarmed by the humorist himself, who said famously: “If the characters of past ages and men are to be drawn at all, they should be drawn like themselves; that is, with their excellencies, and with their foibles.” Nowhere have I intended to spare Sterne nor to idealize him. My endeavor has been, first and last, to tell the truth about him—to give him his chance among the immortals.

The questions ever before me have been: What sort of man was Sterne? How did he conduct himself in the days of his obscurity and after he had come into his fame? What did he do and what did he say? What books did he read? What were his pastimes? and what were his pleasures? Who were his friends? and who were his enemies, if he had any? And what did they say or think of him? In a word, wherein lay the secret of the man whose speech and conduct filled the imaginations of all who knew him intimately, whether in York, London, Paris, or Rome? These questions would be without much interest, as Nepos once remarked in a similar case, were not Sterne the author of two books which give him a large place in modern literature, perhaps by the side of Rabelais and Cervantes. Certainly the publication of *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* must be kept in mind as the great events in Sterne’s life. To-

wards them and his other works must converge all personal details. It is only because of these books that a biographer can surely count upon a curiosity to know something about the personality of him who wrote them. And if the reader discovers, as he will, that *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* are in part autobiography, and that their author was as strange a compound of whims as are they, then new points of vantage may be gained for viewing and judging Sterne stage by stage in his career, and for achieving a final portrait of the man in relation to his works.

The materials for a Life of Sterne, though not abundant, are quite adequate at most points. For his childhood, we have the memoirs which he wrote out for his daughter a few months before his death. For the period covering his life as Prebendary of York and Vicar of Sutton, we have a series of letters to a friend; a long letter to his uncle, amounting almost to an autobiography; a body of anecdotes collected by one who, as a boy, tagged at his heels and listened to his jests by the fireside after supper; and a series of local pamphlets in a lively warfare to which the Yorkshire parson contributed the chief merriment. For Sterne in his fame, we have nearly two hundred letters to various friends; many references to him in the newspapers and in contemporary memoirs and correspondence; a journal of his uncensored emotions (sometimes recorded hour by hour) extending over four important months of the year before his death; and the observations of a young man of letters in Paris, who closely watched him in and out of the salons, conversed with him on various occasions, and wrote down his impressions of the Chevalier Sterne. Finally, there are the portraits of Sterne by the great painters of the age, who invited him to their tables, studied him there under the most favorable conditions, and asked him to sit to them the next morning.

Nevertheless a Life of Sterne proved no easy task for

several reasons. In the first place, it was a slow process to collect materials which lie dispersed in many books, documents, and manuscripts. True, this work had been already performed to some extent by others; but what they had accomplished had to be verified and then extended in many directions. Again, it was necessary to keep always in mind the question how far *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* were a rendering of actual incidents in Sterne's personal history. This question can never be quite answered; for all that a biographer can expect is corroborative evidence here and there from external sources. Whether he goes right or wrong in his inferences from such facts as are at his command, depends partly upon his judgment, and partly upon the conception he unconsciously forms of Sterne's character as he goes along. No one can ever feel quite sure of himself in dealing with these apparent correspondences. He knows that incidents in Sterne's life, all the way from boyhood down to near death, are in Sterne's books; but he knows also that they are entangled with much that belongs only to the realm of his art. The cautious and yet very large use I have made of *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* will appear justified, I trust, in the course of the narrative.

Moreover, Sterne's letters, upon which a biographer must mainly depend, have survived in a wretched condition. Many of those that appeared in the years following his death are undated. Their sequence can be determined, if at all, only from internal evidence. The early collections sometimes contain forgeries which must be sifted out; and in letters for the most part genuine, passages have been suppressed and replaced by new ones. Names of correspondents and other persons are commonly indicated by an initial or two; and at times there is no clue to them at all, unless one may read a line of stars into a name. In a similar but not identical way, Sterne's correspondence as published in later times

has been interpolated out of sheer dishonesty, or modified in phrasing so as to conform to the reticence of the Victorian era. Were there space here, it would be interesting to illustrate in detail how this has been done. A passage, for example, in one of the letters to the Rev. John Blake was deleted by the editor of the series, and compensation was made for the loss by inserting phrases which do not occur anywhere in the originals. In other cases, a letter in its published form may be at variance with the manuscript all the way through. Occasionally a letter has survived for comparison in three versions: as a preliminary draft, as it passed through the post, and as it was dressed up by an editor for the public.

At one time or another, I have examined all accessible manuscripts that have come to my notice. The largest single collection is in the British Museum, whose officers granted me the usual privileges for having them copied or photographed. The story of Mrs. Draper's life and of her friendship with Sterne was rendered possible by the courtesy of the late Lord Basing, who placed at my disposal Mrs. Draper's unpublished correspondence and other documents preserved at Hoddington, some of which have since appeared in print. A part of the Letter Book in which Sterne kept letters which he particularly liked, whether his own or from his friends, was acquired by the late J. Pierpont Morgan, who generously gave me access to it. This old book, besides containing a number of letters which had never been published, proved the authenticity of several other letters long supposed to be forgeries. Since the death of Mr. Morgan, important additions have been made to the Sterne correspondence by his son, J. Pierpont Morgan. These new letters of the Morgan Collection, now rivalling the one in the British Museum, I have read during the revision of my book. They are among the liveliest that ever came from the gay pen of Laurence Sterne. With the permission of Mr. Morgan and the

co-operation of Miss Belle da Costa Greene I am able to print, with several photogravures, the entire Letter Book, wherein may be read Sterne's letters as he first wrote them or afterwards copied them out. When I began with Sterne twenty years ago, biographers still felt the constraint of an era that had not quite passed. Fortunately they may now speak out and present manuscript letters without bowdlerizing them.

Copies of one or more letters were also once supplied by Mr. Alfred Huth, of London, Mr. A. H. Joline, of New York City, Mr. W. K. Bixby, of St. Louis, Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons and Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co., of New York City, and Messrs. Robson and Co. and Messrs. Henry Sotheran and Co., of London. Alas, several of the men who in the first instance permitted me to examine their Sterne manuscripts are no longer living. A few months before his death, Mr. W. H. Arnold, of Nutley, N. J., sent me copies of three letters with the interesting "Memorandums" that Sterne left with Elizabeth Montagu on going abroad. Two years ago these manuscripts were posthumously published. A copy of one of the "Hannah letters" I have just received from Mr. A. Edward Newton, of Philadelphia. Three other letters, though previously known to me, I have read again in the collection of Mr. R. B. Adam, of Buffalo; and Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, of Philadelphia, placed in my hands Sterne's own letters and the letters concerning him that have survived in the vast correspondence of Elizabeth Montagu.

In quoting from private manuscripts, I have aimed to keep well within the bounds set by their owners. All excerpts from original letters have been printed as Sterne and his friends wrote them, save that numerals and abbreviations have usually been written out in full, and occasional changes have been made in capitals and punctuation where the one or the other seemed very awkward or very obscure. In all this, I have remem-

bered, though I could not always follow it to the letter, Sterne's injunction to his printer: "That, at your peril, you do not presume to alter or transpose one Word, nor rectify one false Spelling, nor so much as add or diminish one Comma or Tittle."

Underlying this account of the humorist's life, especially of his life in the north, is information derived from local records and newspapers. The Institutions of the Diocese of York and the Act Book of the Dean and Chapter not only shed light upon the details of Sterne's ecclesiastical appointments, but they also served to identify many of his friends at York. The parish book at Sutton I found curious for its Shandean entries; and the memorials of deeds in the Registry Office at Northallerton likewise revealed Sterne's dealings in land. In this connection, I remember especially the Rev. Canon Watson, of the Minster Library, by whose aid I discovered a copy of the first edition of Sterne's *Political Romance*. Subsequently I found two other copies of the satire among volumes of anonymous pamphlets elsewhere. The Minster Library contains also many other local pamphlets indispensable to the biographer, and a file of *The York Courant*, covering nearly the entire period of Sterne's active life. I should not forget, too, for their assistance, Dr. George A. Auden, of Birmingham, Mr. A. H. Hudson, Registrar of the Diocese of York, the late T. B. Whytehead, Clerk of the Dean and Chapter, and Mr. William Brown, F.S.A., of Thirsk, with his exact knowledge of local conditions in the eighteenth century. I was indebted to Mr. W. W. Smith, of Lincoln, for Sterne's appointment to St. Ives, as recorded in the Act Book of the Bishop of Lincoln, and to Mr. Edwin Abbott, Librarian of Jesus College, for all entries relating to Sterne in the college register. Various collectors in England and the United States have permitted me to inspect their first editions of Sterne's separate publications. Among them I wish to mention espe-

cially Mr. Harold Murdock of the Harvard University Press.

By the courtesy of the owners, I have had by me photographs of the portraits for which Sterne sat in England, France, and Italy, many contemporary and later engravings after these portraits, and a group of amusing (sometimes coarse) caricatures. In various books nearly all the great portraits of Sterne have been reproduced, and several of the caricatures also, including his own cruel sketch of his wife. Naturally it has been rather difficult to choose among them for illustration here. Still, after all that may be said for the other portraits, the one by Sir Joshua Reynolds representing Sterne in the first flush of his fame is beyond question the best and most characteristic. This remarkable portrait, now at Lansdowne House, was photographed for me by permission of Lord Lansdowne. If the photograph may be trusted, time has wrought havoc with the original. The eyes, once wonderful, have grown dull and they will soon disappear altogether. So at last I decided to substitute for the original Reynolds portrait the very striking mezzotint engraving after it by Edward Fisher, which Miss Greene, the director of the Pierpont Morgan Library, placed at my disposal. In the text I have described a second and almost unknown portrait of Sterne by Reynolds, which is in no way comparable with the painter's masterpiece.

Sterne's face in repose was rather sober. No visitors, I daresay, were by to enliven it when he was painted by Gainsborough at Bath in ruffles and short wig. The Gainsborough now hangs in the Salford Art Galleries, where it is deteriorating as fast as the Reynolds portrait. The full face of youth is shown in the Ramsay portrait on the walls of the great hall at Jesus College. The prominent nose which was the occasion of many a jest dominates the portrait bust by Nollekens and is caricatured in Patch's sketch of Yorick confronted by Death.

The Nollekens bust in terra-cotta, of which a marble replica was presented to the National Portrait Gallery a few years ago, somehow gives us Sterne as the twentieth century would like to have him.

With some hesitancy I have put aside several of the portraits as less significant than others or because they may be easily seen elsewhere. Likewise all the third and fourth rate portraits belonging to the latter part of the eighteenth century, of which may be mentioned one by Thomas and another by Hopkins, neither of whom ever saw Sterne. Of the caricatures, some would give offence and others are very crude. There is one jolly little scene in Vauxhall Gardens where Yorick is pointed out to bystanders as he is walking with a lady on his arm. Is it Mrs. Vesey, the Bluestocking? I could not omit, of course "The Mountebank and his Macaroni," of which the second figure, by Thomas Bridges, shows Sterne not so much as a macaroni as a clown exhibiting himself on the streets of York in days long before he came into his fame.

Very interesting is Sterne as he appeared to a Frenchman in the water-color by Carmontelle, formerly in the collection of the Duc d'Aumale at Chantilly. A photogravure for this book has been made from a beautifully colored engraving by Messrs. Colnaghi and Company of London. When Sterne sat to Carmontelle, he was worn thin by disease and dinners. Did Sterne at that time really have the Voltairean features? Or did Carmontelle put them in by way of compliment? Through the courtesy of Mr. George A. Plimpton, of New York, who has recently added them to his collection of literary portraits, I am able to add the pastels of Sterne and his wife by Francis Cotes, dated 1759 and 1761 respectively. They are the "crayon-portraits" which Hawthorne once saw in the upper rooms of a bookseller in Old Boston. The novelist was rather hard, I think, on Sterne's wife, "looking," he remarked of her picture,

“so haughty and unamiable, that the wonder is, not that he ultimately left her, but how he ever contrived to live a week with such an awful woman.”

This last year a good oil painting of Sterne by an unknown hand also came out of its hiding place and was purchased by the National Portrait Gallery. It shows him as he appeared late in the Shandean period. Where, one now wonders, is the bust of Sterne that Roubiliac made from life for Garrick? It must have been an excellent likeness, for neither Garrick nor his wife let it pass from them during their lifetime. After the death of Mrs. Garrick the bust was sold and has never been heard of since.

The photogravure of Hall-Stevenson—Sterne’s other self—is from a photograph of a very fine portrait which was sent to me by Mr. W. H. A. Wharton, of Skelton Castle; and the engraving of the Castle itself has been taken from the frontispiece which so delighted Sterne when he first opened the copy of *Crazy Tales* that followed him over into France. Shandy Hall, where Sterne wrote most of *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* is shown as it was fifteen years ago. Since that time it has been gradually falling into decay like the great portrait that was painted of him by Reynolds.

As will be readily seen, the bibliography follows the pattern I adopted in *The History of Henry Fielding*. It includes in separate parts both publications and existing manuscripts so far as I know of them. The index has been prepared in collaboration with Miss Mary C. Withington, secretary to the University Librarian. The book as revised and enlarged now appears under the auspices of the Yale University Press, by whom the copyright has been acquired.

Wilbur L. Cross.

*Yale University,
April 10, 1925.*

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THE ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME ONE

Laurence Sterne

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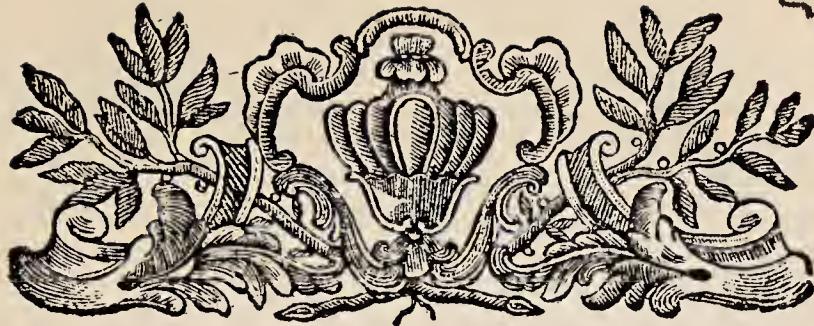
From a copy in the library of Mr. Chauncey B. Tinker.

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From the manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library.

From a reproduction of the water-color by Louis Carmon-telle.



W. H. Wilkes

T H E
L I F E and T I M E S
O F
L A U R E N C E S T E R N E

C H A P. I.

Birth and Education. 1713-1736

I.

THE great humorist whose life I have undertaken to relate anew, would have been amused by a serious attempt to discover him among his ancestors. Musty records preserved religiously by his Yorkshire neighbors, that they might the more readily boast the achievements of a great-grandfather, interested him, it is true, greatly; but only because they furnished matter for jest. His *Tristram Shandy* is, as all readers of it know, a burlesque history of a typical English family (much like Sterne's own) that gained its rank in the time of Henry the Eighth, and subsequently sank under the disgrace of flat noses and inauspicious names. The Shandys could claim in the sixteenth century, says Sterne with near reference to

himself, "no less than a dozen alchymists," whose souls passed on, a century or two later, into an archbishop, a Welsh judge, "some three or four aldermen," and eventually into a mountebank. His more ideal self, which bears the name of Parson Yorick, the humorist aptly derived in direct line from Shakespeare's Yorick of Denmark, whose "flashes of merriment were wont to set the table on a roar" far back in the days of the good King Hamlet.

Despite this raillery of himself as akin to the old alchemists and court jesters, Sterne was glad enough to count among his ancestors an Archbishop of York and a succession of country gentlemen since the fifteenth century. Long annoyed by scribblers' tales about his early life and whence he came, he set down, some six months before his death, certain particulars of family history and of his boyhood for his daughter Lydia, "in case hereafter she should have a curiosity or a kinder motive to know them."

It may well be that Danish blood really flowed in Sterne's veins as well as in the imaginary Yorick's; for the family to which he belonged sprang from the yeomanry and minor gentry of old East Anglia—Norfolk and Suffolk—and the border shires where the Danes settled in great numbers. Thence various members of the family migrated to the north until Yorkshire became their chief home, while others settled in Ireland, establishing there a collateral branch, which included John Sterne (1624-1669), the founder of the Irish College of Physicians at Dublin, and his son, likewise named John (1660-1745), who became in turn Dean of St. Patrick's and Bishop of Clogher. The latter figures in literary history as an intimate friend of Swift and Stella, whom he entertained with profuse hospitality. The more learned of the family evidently associated their name with the old English word *stearn*, dialectical *starn* to this day, signifying a *starling*; for as soon as they rose to rank and wealth, their arms appeared, with some variation, as "gold, a chevron engrailed between three crosses flory sable, surmounted with a starling in proper colors for a crest." That starling, made captive, it will be remembered, was long afterwards brought into the *Sentimental Journey* as the motif for a pathetic discourse on the bitterness of slavery.

Laurence Sterne, the subject of this biography, was in direct descent from William Sterne, who was living towards the close of Elizabeth's reign at Cropwell-Butler, a village and manor to the south of Bingham in Nottinghamshire. William Sterne was in turn lineally descended, as his arms clearly indicate, from the Sternes that had been long seated near Cambridge, first at Stapleford and afterwards at Stow-cum-Quy, whence issued also the Sternes in Ireland. Remoter ancestry of the family points especially to the Sternes who by marriage with the Gambons came into possession of Whitwell Hall in Norfolk under the Lancastrian kings. A son of the William Sterne aforementioned, named Simon, settled at Mansfield, "a flourishing and genteel market town" some miles to the north of Cropwell-Butler, where he married Margery, daughter of Gregory Walker and widow of one Charles Cartwright. Of the marriage was born, in or near 1596, Richard Sterne, who, becoming Archbishop of York, was the first to give distinction to the family name.

This Richard Sterne, great-grandfather of the humorist, was a man who combined shrewd intelligence with that energy necessary for making one's way in the world. As a boy "two remarkable deliverances" were related of him by the old story-tellers. He fell into a sluice which carried him beneath a mill-wheel, and tumbled from a church-steeple where he was playing at see-saw with another boy; but in both cases he escaped unharmed under the guidance of "a gracious Providence." He attended the free school at Mansfield, whence he passed, at the age of fifteen, to Trinity College, Cambridge. After taking the usual degrees in arts, he was elected Fellow of Corpus Christi, and for ten years thereafter "engaged in the instruction of pupils with credit both to himself and to the college." In the meantime, both of the great universities honored him with degrees in divinity, and he became well known among ecclesiastics—the distinction seems rather grotesque—for a summary of "the 3600 faults in our printed Bibles," a feat in line with the labors of Scaliger and other learned classical scholars of the preceding generation who had awakened wonder by the multitude of errors which they were able to discover in ancient texts. Early in 1634, the Bishop of Ely, by direction of his Majesty, ap-

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pointed him Master of Jesus College. To Sterne's prestige as teacher and scholar was now added that of an able administrator. By his efforts among the fellows and other friends, funds were raised for various purposes, but especially for building "the north side of the outer court" of Jesus College, which still stands "as a monument to his name."

The young Master of Jesus—not yet forty years old—was, as might be inferred from his position, a most ardent supporter of the existing order in church and state. Archbishop Laud summoned him to London and enrolled him among his chaplains, to say nothing of other substantial honors conferred upon him: all, doubtless, with a view to having at Cambridge an adherent who could be trusted to furnish full and accurate information concerning things ecclesiastical. To King Charles and his agents who came frequently to Cambridge, Sterne was also equally loyal. In the summer of 1642, the king set up his standard at Nottingham and made ready for battle. At that juncture, Sterne joined with two other Cambridge masters in collecting and sending moneys and plate to his Majesty. Cromwell was on the watch, and though the treasure reached the king, the masters were surrounded while at prayers in their several chapels, and taken up to London; led captive, says the contemporary account, "through Bartholomew Fair, and so far as Temple Bar, and back through the city to prison in the Tower, on purpose that they might be hooted at or stoned by the rabble rout." During three years of imprisonment in various places, Sterne was subjected at times to barbarous usage, barely escaping transportation; but these were among common incidents of the Revolution, as was likewise his ejection from the mastership of Jesus College.

During this dark period Richard Sterne once stepped forth to the light to take part in a memorable scene. The Revolution was moving on swiftly. The king had been defeated at Marston Moor, and Laud was about to go the way of Strafford. Scant four days were given the archbishop to prepare for death. On Laud's petition to Parliament that one of his ancient chaplains might be sent to him to administer spiritual comfort, if he must die, Dr. Sterne was selected. Sterne was with his friend and patron during the last three days of his life, and attended him to the scaffold. After reading his last sermon and

last public prayer, Laud turned towards the block, and, as he did so, he placed the manuscript in the hands of his chaplain, that the world might have true and faithful copies thereof. Liberated soon after this terrible event, Sterne passed many subsequent years in seclusion at Stevenage in Hertfordshire, where, save for a small pension from one of Laud's friends, he earned a livelihood by taking pupils. When Charles the Second returned to his own, Sterne was among the first to win preferment. A few months in his Cambridge mastership once more and three years Bishop of Carlisle, he was translated in the spring of 1664 to the Archbishopric of York, where he sat until his death on June 18, 1683. His body lies buried in the chapel of St. Stephen in his own cathedral at York. To his memory his great-grandson Richard erected a marble monument with a canopy, beneath which half reclines a mitred figure with the head resting upon one of the hands. A fine portrait of the archbishop in his splendid robes, a mezzotint by Francis Place of York, hangs near Cranmer's over the dais in the hall of Jesus College. With eyes curiously askance, the dignified prelate looks down the hall, past Coleridge, upon the youthful portrait of his great-grandson, as if in question whether he should own him.

It would be impossible to imagine the archbishop sitting down to *Gargantua* or *Pantagruel*, the nearest approach to *Tristram Shandy* in those days. His face, with no trace of humor in it, looks too serious for that. As a young man, this Richard Sterne wrote Latin verses and commented upon the Psalms. Later in life he bore a hand in Brian Walton's Polyglot Bible involving nine languages, and subsequently assisted in a revision of the Book of Common Prayer. After his death appeared a Latin treatise of his on logic, with illustrations drawn mostly from the Scriptures, as was the fashion in those days. While Archbishop of York, he made many friends and many enemies. To those who agreed with him "he was a man of eminent worth and abilities." "He was," says a letter from York just after his death, "greatly respected and generally lamented. All the clergy commemorate his sweet condescensions, his free communications, faithful counsels, exemplary temperance, cheerful hospitality and bountiful

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charity.”* On the other hand, Burnet regarded him as only “a sour, ill-tempered” ecclesiastic, who, after gaining the see of York, “minded chiefly the enriching of his family.” As a politician, it is said further, he was more than ordinarily compliant in his last years to the Court and to the Duke of York; wherefore came the suspicion that he was at heart a Papist. Baxter, who clashed with him in debate at the Savoy Conference over a reformed liturgy, was surprised to find deceit concealed by a face that “look’d so honestly and gravely and soberly.”

Although these adverse opinions of two eminent divines were no doubt colored by political and religious dislike, they nevertheless point to a truth. Richard Sterne was a conspicuous example among the clergy of the Restoration whose ideals of church dignity and ecclesiastical polity had been derived from Archbishop Laud. To the new age they appeared narrow and bigoted. Like his famous descendant, the archbishop was also irritable and hasty in temper, and prone to provoke a quarrel. Edward Rainbowe, who succeeded him at Carlisle, found the episcopal palace barely habitable and brought suit against him for dilapidations. While he held the see of York, Sterne certainly amassed a fortune, but not, as Burnet charges, wholly for his own benefit or that of his family. The archbishop’s benefactions were numerous and liberal. From his own purse he contributed, for example, £1800 towards the rebuilding of St. Paul’s Cathedral after the great fire; and some years before his death he founded, by an annual rent charge of £60 on his manors in Yorkshire, six scholarships at Cambridge—four at Jesus College and two at Corpus Christi—for natives of Nottingham and Yorkshire. One of these scholarships was to come in the course of time to the author of *Tristram Shandy*.

The archbishop had married, sometime in middle life, a woman who was his junior by some years—Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Dickenson, lord of the manor of Farnborough, Hampshire, who bore him thirteen children. She died on

* Nicolson and Burn, *History of Antiquities of Westmoreland and Cumberland*, II, 290 (London, 1777). In contrast, see Burnet, *History of his own Times*, II, 208 (London, 1818); and *Reliquiae Baxterianæ*, part II, 338 (London, 1696).

March 6, 1673-4, at the age of fifty-eight, while on a visit to London, and was buried with her family at Farnborough. At his own death, ten years later, the archbishop divided his comfortable estates among his three surviving sons.* The eldest son Richard, to whom fell the largest share, married and took as his seat Kilvington Hall, near Thirsk and within the district where Laurence Sterne was eventually to hold several church livings. He was a justice of the peace and represented Ripon in one or more Parliaments under Charles the Second. Ralph Thoresby, the antiquary, who passed five days with him in the coach up to London, found him "very good company (not so hot as I feared, being the archbishop's son)."[†] William, the second son of the archbishop, besides inheriting "lands and tenements" at Ryther in the fertile valley of the Wharfe, was bequeathed five hundred pounds. He married Frances, daughter of William Cartwright of Normanton, and settled at Mansfield on the estate of his grandfather. The third son, known as Simon Sterne of Halifax, received by the terms of his father's will, in lieu of lands, five hundred pounds outright, three hundred pounds in East India stock, and a remission of his debts to the archbishop. This Simon Sterne of Halifax, who seems to have been improvident in his youth, was the grandfather of Laurence Sterne.

At this point another strain in the descent of the humorist becomes of especial interest. Simon Sterne married, to his great good fortune, Mary Jaques, heiress to a large estate at Elvington, near York on the river Derwent. Her grandfather, Sir Roger Jaques, was a prosperous merchant and alderman of York back in the time of the first Stuarts. A staunch loyalist in a city where the loyalists predominated, he rose, in 1639, to the honorable post of Lord Mayor, and was knighted in that year by King Charles while resting at York on his way north against the Scots. Roger Jaques had been aided, no doubt, in his career, gaining thereby social position as well as wealth, by marrying into the Rawdons, one of the oldest and richest of the northern families. The Mary Rawdon whose hand he succeeded in winning, was the daughter of a certain Laurence

* The will was signed and sealed on April 14, 1683.—Registry of Wills at York.

† Thoresby, *Diary*, I, 154 (London, 1830).

Rawdon, who settled at York during the last years of Elizabeth, and made a fortune in trade. Her brother was the Marmaduke Rawdon who wrote an agreeable account of travels in Britain and on the Continent.* In the glimpses given of her by Marmaduke in his book, Lady Jaques, as she was always called, appears as a charming, well-bred woman, who was careful to live in accordance with her station. She goes up to London with her husband to see the "rarities," including a visit with a merry company to the *Royal Sovereign*, a big ship, newly built and lying down the river; they have an audience with the king and queen at Greenwich; and thoroughly tired out with a month's feasting among relatives and friends, Lady Jaques is glad to get back to Yorkshire once more. During her last years—she survived her husband—she passed her time between Elvington and her house on the Pavement, then one of the fashionable streets at York. She kept a coach and might be seen on a fine day taking the air in it, accompanied by a blackamoer running along by the side. It is altogether a delightful picture such as one ought to find somewhere among the ancestors of Laurence Sterne.

The Mary Jaques whom Simon Sterne married was the granddaughter of this genteel and vivacious Mary Rawdon. Her brother Roger dying without issue, she succeeded as his heir to the lordship of Elvington. With £1800 Simon Sterne purchased Woodhouse, a large estate at Skircoat to the southwest of Halifax, with an Elizabethan mansion looking across the beautiful valley of the Calder. Nothing very distinctive has been discovered about him. He was a justice of the peace and governor of a charity for the poor of Halifax. He died at Woodhouse Hall, "having undergone a severe salivation for a cancer in the mouth," and was buried at Halifax on April 17, 1703.

Simon Sterne left three sons and three daughters. To Richard, the eldest son, born in 1680, descended the estates at Elvington and Woodhouse. In the November following his father's death, Richard married Dorothy, daughter of Thomas Priestley of Halifax and widow of Samuel Lister of Shibden Hall, two miles to the northeast of Halifax, where he resided

* *Life of Marmaduke Rawdon*, edited by Robert Davies for the Camden Society (London, 1863).

for several years. His first wife dying, he married in 1714 Esther, daughter and heiress of Mr. Timothy Booth of Halifax. Most fortunate in his marriages, he grew to be the wealthiest of the Sternes, possessing, besides his inherited estates, lands at Ovenden and Hipperholme. He bore the chief hand in reorganizing the grammar school at Skircoat, of which the Archbishop of York appointed him one of the governors. He was also a governor of a similar foundation at Hipperholme. Hot and litigious in temper, he became involved in several law suits and in a bitter quarrel with the vicar of his parish, who refused him the Sacrament. He died suddenly at Bradford on October 9, 1732, while on his way to York, and was buried at Halifax. He is the uncle who took in little Laurence at Woodhouse and sent him to school. The third son of Simon Sterne, named Jaques and born in 1695 or 1696, will enter these memoirs at a later stage, as the violent Precentor of York who first helped his nephew and then turned against him in great bitterness. Between Richard and Jaques, was born, about 1692, Roger Sterne, the father of the humorist.*

To Roger Sterne, as a younger brother, there were open three obvious careers. He might have married, like so many of his ancestors, an heiress and settled in Yorkshire as a country gentleman. He might have gone like his brother Jaques to the university, and have easily secured a place in the Church within the patronage of some relative or friend of the family. Finally there was the army. He chose the army as in more accord, no doubt, with a roving disposition.

Among the crack regiments raised in 1702, on the outbreak of the war with France and Spain, known in history as the War of the Spanish Succession, was the Thirty-Fourth or the Cumberland Regiment of Foot. Its first colonel was Robert,

* The older pedigrees of the Sterne family have been corrected, revised, and enlarged in the *Publications of the Harleian Society*. See especially in this series *Familiæ Minorum Gentium*, II, 516-517; the *Visitation of Norfolk in 1563 and 1613*; and the *Visitation of Cambridge in 1575 and 1619*. Miscellaneous information is to be found in the *Northowram or Coley Register*, edited by J. Horsfall Turner (London, 1881). None of the pedigrees gives the date of birth for Roger Sterne; nor is it contained in the parish registers either at Halifax or Elvington.

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Lord Lucas, and among the captains was Richard Steele, the wit and essayist. The men, as one may view them in old plates, made a smart appearance in their tri-cornered hats, long scarlet coats richly trimmed with yellow, and white gaiters reaching above the knees. Under their second colonel, Hans Hamilton, who succeeded Lord Lucas in 1705, they proved their mettle in Spain during and after the siege of Barcelona, where they were terribly cut up in a gallant charge against the French. With the prestige won in Spain, the regiment returned to England in 1707 to recruit; and the next year it was ordered north on the alarm of an invasion of Scotland by the French in favor of the Stuart Pretender. For several months the Thirty-Fourth was stationed at Leeds, and while there it may have gained, among its new recruits of 1708, Roger Sterne, then a mere stripling not more than sixteen years old.

In 1709, the regiment was sent over to the Netherlands, where it was engaged for some months in garrison duty, owing, says the chronicle,* to the fact that it was composed mostly of "young soldiers." The next year it joined the main army of Marlborough. At the siege of Douay, it was "employed on duty in the trenches, carrying on the approaches, repulsing the sallies of the garrison, and storming the outworks," in all of which it repeatedly distinguished itself. On the conclusion of peace at Utrecht in 1713, the Thirty-Fourth was withdrawn with other regiments to England and soon afterwards it was reduced. But on the uprising of the Scots in 1715 under the Earl of Mar, the regiment was re-formed with Thomas Chudleigh as colonel, who had in fact succeeded Hans Hamilton before the Peace of Utrecht. Among the new officers appears the name of Roger Sterne as one of nine ensigns. After varied service in Ireland, the restored regiment took part in the siege and capture of Vigo, in various operations in Flanders, and in the defence of Gibraltar. Under Chudleigh, as well as under Hamilton, the Thirty-Fourth was conspicuous for its bravery in the field and "its good conduct in quarters."

Notwithstanding his long service, Roger Sterne attained to no high place in the army. To the last he seems to have been

* Richard Cannon, *Historical Record of the Thirty-Fourth, or The Cumberland Regiment of Foot* (London, 1844).

only a poor ensign, improvident and good-natured. He was described by his son, it should be said in passing, as "Lieutenant in Handaside's regiment," which was the Twenty-Second. But the statement about his rank as well as his regiment was likely an error of memory. At the outset of his career the ensign made, in the view of his family, a most unfortunate marriage. Following the army in Flanders was "a noted sutler" named Nuttle, who was stepfather to Agnes Hebert, "widow of a captain of a good family," and clearly, as the name shows, of French descent on her father's side.* Roger Sterne was in debt to Nuttle, and, to quit the score, he relieved the sutler of further support of his wife's daughter, by marrying her on September 25, 1711. The story of Roger Sterne and his family subsequent to this whimsical marriage is related in the brief memoir that the humorist wrote out for his daughter Lydia the year before his death. The pathetic narrative is interwoven with the birth of Laurence and other children, and with those movements of the regiment which we have outlined in advance for the sake of clearness.

"This Nuttle," says the memoir, after telling why Roger Sterne married Agnes Hebert, "had a son by my grandmother—a fine person of a man but a graceless whelp—what became of him I know not.—The family (if any left), live now at Clonmel in the south of Ireland, at which town I was born November 24th, 1713, a few days after my mother arrived from Dunkirk.—My birth-day was ominous to my poor father, who was, the day after our arrival, with many other brave officers broke, and sent adrift into the wide world with a wife and two children—the elder of which was Mary; she was born in Lisle in French Flanders, July the tenth, one thousand seven hundred and twelve, New Stile.—This child was most unfortunate—she married one Weemans in Dublin—who used her most unmercifully—spent his substance, became a bankrupt, and left my poor sister to shift for herself,—which she was able to do but for a few months, for she went to a friend's house in the country, and died of a broken

* In *Notes and Queries* for Oct., 1910, R. M. Hutchinson-Low describes a Church of England Prayer Book, printed in French in 1706, over the preface of which appears the name of "Agnus [sic] Sterne." The book came to Mr. Hutchinson-Low's library from Halifax.

heart. She was a most beautiful woman—of a fine figure, and deserved a better fate.—The regiment, in which my father served, being broke, he left Ireland as soon as I was able to be carried, with the rest of his family, and came to the family seat at Elvington, near York, where his mother lived. She was daughter to Sir Roger Jaques, and an heiress. There we sojourned for about ten months, when the regiment was established, and our household decamped with bag and baggage for Dublin—within a month of our arrival, my father left us, being ordered to Exeter, where, in a sad winter, my mother and her two children followed him, travelling from Liverpool by land to Plymouth. (Melancholy description of this journey not necessary to be transmitted here.) In twelve months we were all sent back to Dublin.—My mother, with three of us, (for she laid in at Plymouth of a boy, Joram), took ship at Bristol, for Ireland, and had a narrow escape from being cast away by a leak springing up in the vessel.—At length, after many perils, and struggles, we got to Dublin.—There my father took a large house, furnished it, and in a year and a half's time spent a great deal of money.—

“In the year one thousand seven hundred and nineteen, all unning'd again; the regiment was ordered, with many others, to the Isle of Wight, in order to embark for Spain in the Vigo expedition. We accompanied the regiment, and were driven into Milford Haven, but landed at Bristol, from thence by land to Plymouth again, and to the Isle of Wight—where I remember we stayed encamped some time before the embarkation of the troops—(in this expedition from Bristol to Hampshire we lost poor Joram—a pretty boy, four years old, of the small-pox), my mother, sister, and myself, remained at the Isle of Wight during the Vigo Expedition, and until the regiment had got back to Wicklow in Ireland, from whence my father sent for us.—We had poor Joram's loss supplied during our stay in the Isle of Wight, by the birth of a girl, Anne, born September the twenty-third, one thousand seven hundred and nineteen.—This pretty blossom fell at the age of three years, in the barracks of Dublin—she was, as I well remember, of a fine delicate frame, not made to last long, as were most of my father's babes.—We embarked for Dublin, and had all been cast away by a most violent storm; but through

the intercessions of my mother, the captain was prevailed upon to turn back into Wales, where we stayed a month, and at length got into Dublin, and travelled by land to Wicklow, where my father had for some weeks given us over for lost.— We lived in the barracks at Wicklow, one year, (one thousand seven hundred and twenty) when Devijeher (so called after Colonel Devijeher,*) was born; from thence we decamped to stay half a year with Mr. Fetherston, a clergyman, about seven miles from Wicklow, who being a relation of my mother's, invited us to his parsonage at Animo.—It was in this parish, during our stay, that I had that wonderful escape in falling through a mill-race whilst the mill was going, and of being taken up unhurt—the story is incredible, but known for truth in all that part of Ireland—where hundreds of the common people flocked to see me.—

“From hence we followed the regiment to Dublin, where we lay in the barracks a year.—In this year, one thousand seven hundred and twenty-one, I learned to write, &c.—The regiment, ordered in twenty-two, to Carrickfergus in the north of Ireland; we all decamped, but got no further than Drogheda, thence ordered to Mullengar, forty miles west, where by Providence we stumbled upon a kind relation, a collateral descendant from Archbishop Sterne, who took us all to his castle and kindly entertained us for a year—and sent us to the regiment at Carrickfergus, loaded with kindnesses, &c.—a most rueful and tedious journey had we all, in March, to Carrickfergus, where we arrived in six or seven days—little Devijeher here died, he was three years old—He had been left behind at nurse at a farmhouse near Wicklow, but was fetch'd to us by my father the summer after—another child sent to fill his place, Susan; this babe too left us behind in this weary journey—The autumn of that year, or the spring afterwards, (I forget which) my father got leave of his colonel to fix me at school—which he did near Halifax, with an able master; with whom I staid some time, 'till by God's care of me my cousin Sterne, of Elvington, became a father to me, and sent me to the university, &c. &c. To pursue the thread of our story, my father's regiment was the year after ordered to

* Should be Colonel Devischer—evidently a misreading of the manuscript.

Londonderry, where another sister was brought forth, Catherine, still living, but most unhappily estranged from me by my uncle's wickedness, and her own folly—from this station the regiment was sent to defend Gibraltar, at the siege, where my father was run through the body by Captain Phillips,* in a duel, (the quarrel begun about a goose) with much difficulty he survived—tho' with an impaired constitution, which was not able to withstand the hardships it was put to—for he was sent to Jamaica, [with his colonel and a part of his regiment] where he soon fell by the country fever, which took away his senses first, and made a child of him, and then, in a month or two, walking about continually without complaining, till the moment he sat down in an arm chair, and breathed his last—which was at Port Antonio, on the north of the island.”†

Of the poor ensign, perhaps just advanced to lieutenant, who died under circumstances so distressing, far from home sometime in March, 1731, the son retained to the last most vivid recollections. “My father,” the narrative goes on to say, “was a little smart man—active to the last degree, in all exercises—most patient of fatigue and disappointments, of which it pleased God to give him full measure—he was in his temper somewhat rapid, and hasty—but of a kindly, sweet disposition, void of all design; and so innocent in his own intentions, that he suspected no one; so that you might have cheated him ten times a day, if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose.” At that time Laurence was still in school at Halifax and his mother and sister Catherine were living with friends in Ireland. On the death of her husband, Mrs. Sterne received a pension of £20 a year, and to add to her

* Christopher Philips. In the *Dublin University Magazine* for September, 1862 (Vol. LX. 285), are given details of the duel. “The affair took place,” it is said there, “in a room; and Captain Philips put his rapier with such vigor through Captain Sterne’s person, that he actually pinned him to the wall behind. Then, with infinite presence of mind, the little smart man begged Captain Philips, with much courtesy, that before withdrawing his instrument he would have the courtesy to brush off any plaster adherent to the point, which it would be disagreeable to him to have introduced into his system.”

† A theatrical company that went out to Jamaica in 1733 to play the *Beggar’s Opera*, buried, in the course of two months, “their third Polly and two of their men.”—W. R. Chetwood, *General History of the Stage*, 41 (London, 1749).

income she afterwards opened an embroidery school. She proved to be, as will be duly related, an ill-bred woman, with whom none of her husband's family cared to associate. It is doubtless more agreeable to let the mind rest upon Roger Sterne, from whom passed to his son the volatile temperament of his race as we have seen it forming from the archbishop down through the Rawdons—vivacious, quick to take an affront, and yet withal most kindly. In the ensign who fought a duel over a goose surely lurked a humorist. But we should not forget the mother of Laurence Sterne. It is equally significant that there was probably French and Celtic as well as Danish and Saxon blood in the veins of the man who wrote *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*.

Clonmel, the place where Laurence Sterne was born, says the memoir, on November 24, 1713, is a small Irish town above Waterford, in the valley of the Suir. His mother had come there from Dunkirk that her child might be brought forth among her own people. He was named Laurence, it would seem, after that distant ancestor we have mentioned—Laurence Rawdon, sometime merchant and alderman at York and lord of the manor of Elvington. Hard as were the many long journeys and migrations upon the ensign and his wife during the subsequent ten years, the period must have been most agreeable to the boy himself. There were for him, who knew nothing of the tragedy of it, pleasant sojourns in Wales and in the Isle of Wight, and a whole year in an Irish castle with relatives and friends. When he fell through a mill-race, like his great-grandfather the archbishop, while the mill was running, and came out whole and sound, his mother was upset, to be sure, by the incident; but to Laurie, as the country folk crowded about him in wonder at his escape, it was a moment of triumph; for he was the hero of an incredible adventure.

He must have enjoyed, too, the large freedom of barrack life in England and in Ireland, however much it may have tested the endurance of his mother. There he met with new adventures and strange characters, the memory of which never left him. In after years, as he sat down in his Yorkshire parsonage to write his book, his childhood all came back to him—what he had seen with his own eyes and what his father had told him about the first serious engagement of the Thirty-

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Fourth Regiment of Foot in the battle of Wynendale, which Count de la Motte would have won, "had he not pressed too speedily into the wood," and about the Peace of Utrecht which broke my uncle Toby's heart as well as sent Roger Sterne adrift in the world. Out of those memories, fortified by much reading of Marlborough's campaigns and enriched by later observations, came my uncle Toby, Trim, and Le Fever. Of no one more than of Sterne is the saying of Wordsworth truer that the child is father to the man.

II.

HAVING learned to read and write while he lay in the barracks of Dublin, the boy was ready, by 1723 or 1724, for the rudiments of learning. His father then placed him in a grammar school near Halifax, that he might be under the eye of his uncle Richard at Woodhouse Hall. At that time Halifax took the lead in cloth-making among all the towns of north England. Defoe, who passed through the parish in his tour of Great Britain, was much struck by the thrift of the people living in long rows of houses on the hillsides, so thickly placed as to be within speaking distance of one another. All along in front of the houses were tenters on which were stretched pieces of cloth, which, says Defoe, "by their whiteness reflecting the bright rays of the sun that played upon them, formed, I thought, the most agreeable sight I ever saw."* Sterne is strangely silent in his books about this and other novel scenes to which he had been suddenly transferred. Thrift certainly made upon him no impression comparable with the gaiety of military life.

Perhaps he chafed under the restraints of his new surroundings. It is a tradition, supported by an incident or two, that the boy studied when he liked and got more whippings than lessons. It may be that he did not get along well with his uncle at Woodhouse Hall, for he nowhere mentions this Richard Sterne among the relatives that aided him. But his uncle surely gave him shelter and helped pay the expenses of his schooling. Though Sterne had nothing to say about his uncle, he spoke

* *A Tour through Great Britain*, III, 78 (second edition, London, 1738).

with respect of the head of the school, describing him as “an able master.” Whoever he may have been, he saw in Sterne a lad of unusual promise; being the first, as we say nowadays, to discover him. It was not the master but the usher that did the whipping to which reference has been made. Sterne himself related the incident, with some pride, for his daughter Lydia. The master, says Sterne, “had had the cieling of the school-room new whitewashed—the ladder remained there—I one unlucky day mounted it, and wrote with a brush in large capital letters, LAU. STERNE, for which the usher severely whipped me. My master was very much hurt at this, and said, before me, that never should that name be effaced, for I was a boy of genius, and he was sure I should come to preferment—this expression made me forget the stripes I had received.”

The name of the school where this escapade occurred, Sterne failed to mention. The words of his memoir are simply “My father got leave of his colonel to fix me at school—which he did near Halifax, with an able master.” At that time there were, as there are now, two grammar schools near Halifax—the one at Heath, to the south of Halifax and within easy walking distance from Woodhouse up over the moor; the other at Hipperholme, to the east of Halifax and across the valley from Shibden Hall. The former was an ancient foundation, with a stately building of freestone, dating from the time of Queen Elizabeth. The latter, a smaller and less pretentious structure, was founded and endowed in 1661 by Matthew Broadley, Esq., of London, formerly of Halifax. Both were established for the instruction of youth in grammar (Latin and Greek) and other literature and learning, and in all those virtues and good manners which should be a part of a liberal education. By express statute, the masters of both schools were required to be able and sufficient persons, holding at least the degree of Bachelor of Arts from either Oxford or Cambridge. Of their scholars, such private records as may have been kept by the masters have all been lost or destroyed. In which school was educated the author of *Tristram Shandy*?

According to common tradition, at least a century old, Sterne prepared for the university at the Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth at Heath. A clergyman who attended the school between 1808 and 1820, said in a letter to a former

master: "The legend during the time that I was at Heath respecting Sterne was that he was a scholar there, and the panel on the ceiling was pointed out, on which he was said to have daubed Lau: Sterne." An inscription similar to Sterne's, if not the very one, was actually seen and remembered by John Turney of Leek Wotton, in Warwickshire, who passed the year 1809-10 at Heath. Besides noting the fact in his copy of Sterne's works, he afterwards wrote of it more fully in a letter to a friend. "The name of Sterne," says the letter, "was marked on the ceiling of the school room in irregular characters, as if done by some one who knew he was doing wrongly and was fearful of being detected in the act. They were large letters, say (I speak from memory of course) about four and a half inches high, all capitals. They were black as if, as I thought, burnt in with a candle, the smoke from the candle causing them to be black.—LAU STERNE was inscribed about three yards from the Head Master's desk. It ran obliquely from S. W. with rather a turn to the East." The master of Heath in Sterne's time was a certain Thomas Lister, distantly related to the Listers of Shibden Hall. He graduated as Bachelor of Medicine at Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1688, and received his appointment to the school in the same year. After forty years of service, he died in April, 1728. On the supposition that Sterne was a Heath scholar, this, then, was the master who thought him winged for a higher flight than the rest of the boys. On the same supposition, the usher who flogged Laurence may perhaps be identified with one Abraham Milner, a young man eighteen or twenty years old, who never received a degree from either of the great universities, and afterwards opened a bookseller's shop at Halifax.

The case as thus worked out for Heath is a complete and very pretty tale which ought to be true. It really rests, however, upon nothing but vague tradition. It may all be a legend that has grown up round the mere fact that the school was at a convenient distance from the seat of Laurence's uncle. No one, of course, can be disposed to doubt the memory of the old scholar who could recall the Sterne inscription on the ceiling. It is, nevertheless, preposterous to suppose that the original inscription had survived eighty or more years of whitewash and plaster. What the Warwickshire gentleman saw and remem-

bered was doubtless the freak of some boy of later date, who could not find "LAU. STERNE" on the ceiling, and so proceeded to put it there.

To strike more nearly at the heart of the story, the Heath Grammar School, so flourishing earlier and since, was, just in Sterne's time, in a wretched condition. It had for some years been neglected by its governors, who dropped out one by one until there was nobody qualified to receive rents or to fill up vacancies; and its statutes, very strict as one reads them, had all fallen into abeyance. The master, Thomas Lister (who had received a medical degree from Cambridge University), was described at his death by a Halifax lawyer as an "old little good for naught fellow," and by others as long "superannuated" and never efficient. For at least two years before his death, his "few petty scholars" were left to the usher, who was spoken of with equal contempt. Over this state of affairs Richard Sterne became hot as early as 1719, when he reported the mismanagement to the Archbishop of York, within whose jurisdiction the school lay. After years of trouble and expense, the squire succeeded in reorganizing the school under a revised charter bearing date July 31, 1729. A new master, one Christopher Jackson, was appointed in 1730, but he resigned the next year, either because he disliked his position or because he proved incompetent. By that time the school days of Laurence Sterne were nearly over. For two or three of the seven years that Sterne was at school, the master of Heath was superannuated, and for two more there was no master at all. It is difficult to imagine that Laurence could have been among the "few petty scholars" of this period or that he could have regarded as "an able master" the man whom another called a "good for naught." It is much more likely that Thomas Lister, whom, of course, Sterne saw, knew, and heard talked about at Woodhouse, sat for the burlesque portrait of that tutor whom Mr. Walter Shandy would by no means have for his son Tristram. "The governor," said Mr. Shandy, "I make choice of shall neither lisp, or squint, or wink, or talk loud, or look fierce, or foolish;—or bite his lips, or grind his teeth, or speak through his nose. . . . He shall neither walk fast,—or slow, or fold his arms,—for that is laziness;—or hang them down,—for that is folly; or hide them in his pocket, for that is non-

sense.—He shall neither strike, or pinch, or tickle,—or bite, or cut his nails . . . or snift, or drum with his feet or fingers in company.”

Around the Free Grammar School at Hipperholme has been elaborated no fanciful legend of Laurence Sterne, perhaps, as has been indicated, because the school was not so near to Woodhouse. But it is an unbroken tradition among the Listers of Shibden Hall that Hipperholme was Sterne’s school. Miss Lister, who was living thirty years ago at an advanced age, distinctly remembered “her father telling her that Laurence Sterne used to walk to Hipperholme School from his uncle’s house along an ancient foot-path which formerly ran through the yard of Shibden Hall.” She said further that Sterne was “a frequent visitor” at the Hall, when her grandfather, born in the same year as Sterne, was a boy. It may be that the aged lady was mistaken. But a sober statement like hers, bearing none of the marks of fiction, must be accepted, unless there is evidence to the contrary. As a matter of fact, Hipperholme exactly fits into what Sterne said about his school. It was, said Sterne, “near Halifax.” Hipperholme is near Halifax, though not so near Woodhouse as is Heath. But Sterne did not say “near Woodhouse”—that is an added phrase. It was possible for him to have walked from his uncle’s seat to Hipperholme; for if he could find, as he says in *Shandy*, no short cut to learning, he found one to school through the park of Shibden Hall. It seems, however, probable that Sterne stayed a good deal with his friend and schoolmate at Shibden Hall, and he may have lived in the earlier years—his own words would bear that interpretation—with the master of Hipperholme, going to his uncle for the week ends.

During the entire period of Sterne’s schooling, the master of Hipperholme was a Rev. Nathan Sharpe, connected through the Priestleys with the Listers and with Richard Sterne, whose first wife was a Priestley. He graduated Bachelor of Arts at Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1695, and was appointed to Hipperholme in 1703, where he remained till his death thirty years later. A Mr. Sharpe, apparently this one, baptized in 1704 the first child of Richard Sterne. Another member of the family, Abraham Sharpe, also a Cambridge man, whom Richard Sterne addressed as cousin, held the curacy of Sow-

erby Bridge near Woodhouse. Besides being a relative of the master of Hipperholme, Richard Sterne was also a large land-owner in the township and a governor of the school. Family interests thus point directly to Hipperholme as the place where Laurence Sterne acquired the rudiments of learning. When Sterne came to Halifax, Nathan Sharpe was still in the prime of life, not above forty-eight years of age. So far as can be determined, he managed his school well, fulfilling that requirement of the statutes which Sterne but repeated when he referred to his teacher as "an able master." Just as Thomas Lister may have been the original of that schoolmaster whom the elder Shandy could not think of for his son, so Nathan Sharpe may have furnished hints for the man he was in search of. "I will have him, continued my father, cheerful, facete, jovial; at the same time, prudent, attentive to business, vigilant, acute, argue, inventive, quick in resolving doubts and speculative questions;—he shall be wise, and judicious, and learned:—And why not humble, and moderate, and gentle-tempered, . . . said *Yorick*." It was certainly a master of this character who rebuked his usher for whipping Laurence Sterne and by his praise made the boy forget his punishment.*

After all has been said, there still remains reasonable doubt as to where Sterne received his early education. The considerations here set forth in favor of Hipperholme establish conclusively that Sterne was for a time a scholar there, and render it highly probable that he was placed there from the first with the able master who was a friend and relative of his uncle. But it is possible, though not very probable, that he first attended Heath for a year or two, until its affairs reached a crisis, and that he was then transferred to Hipperholme. The question could be settled beyond all doubt only by the registry of the students of the period, but that, if it ever existed, has not survived.

The only document that gives us a glimpse of Sterne at

* Local traditions concerning Sterne's school are contained in Thomas Cox, *A Popular History of the Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth, at Heath, near Halifax* (Halifax, 1879). In 1906, I visited Halifax and the neighborhood that I might consider these traditions in the place of their origin. With my conclusion agreed the Master of the Heath School and the Listers of Shibden Hall.

school is an old exercise book that once came to the hands of Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, from what source he does not say, bearing the title, *Synopsis Communium Locorum ex Poetis Latinis Collecta*, written above the words "Lau. Sterne, September ye 6, 1725." As it bears in another place the date "1728," if there be no misprint, one must infer that Sterne remained in the same school through the period covered by the dates, for he would not likely be put to the same exercises under different masters. It also seems a fair inference that if Sterne was ever at Heath, he remained for only a short time, migrating to Hipperholme as early as 1725. The old "dogged eared volume," as described by Mr. Fitzgerald, shows that Laurence idled a good deal over his lessons, stopping to play, much like Shakespeare's schoolboy, over declensions which are made to include *Nickibus Nonkebus* and *rorum rarum*. Here and there occur the names of Sterne's schoolmates, as "John Turner," "Richard Carr, ejus liber," "Bill Copper," and "I owe Samuel Thorpe one halfpenny but I will pay him to-day." Elsewhere it is said that "labour takes panes." In one place appears a stave of notes with the names written below and signed "L. S." Most interesting as a clue to Sterne's taste then and in after life are the rude drawings scattered over many of the pages. Mingled with owls, cocks, and hens, are several heads of women, and curiously dressed soldiers with sugar-loaf caps, short-stock guns, and straps, such as he remembered from barrack life. There is "a drummer," "a piper," and over one "long-nosed, long chinned face" is written "This is Lorence."*

Notwithstanding the time spent in scribbling over his copy-books, Sterne then laid the foundation of a ready knowledge of the classical literatures. He learned to read and write Latin with great facility. Nearly all the authors in the usual curriculum of the period, he at some time quoted or referred to, evidently from memory. Horace came into his books perhaps more often than the rest. But Cicero, Pliny, Hesiod, and Isocrates are there also. Three other ancients touched his emotions deeply. It grieved him to think that "poor Ovid" died in exile. In *Shandy*, he related, as he remembered it from Vergil, the scene in the Elysian Fields where Aeneas meets "the pensive

* Fitzgerald, *Life of Sterne*, I, 9-10 (London, 1896).

shade of his forsaken Dido," and added that she still awakened in him "those affections which were wont to make me mourn for her when I was at school." Uncle Toby's love for the *Iliad*, as well as for chapbooks in which there were soldiers and adventure and much fighting, is undoubtedly only a reminiscence of Sterne's own passion for them. If we may have it so, the boy purchased with his own pocket money "Guy of Warwick," "Valentine and Orson," "The Seven Champions of Christendom," and handed them round among his school companions. And of the *Iliad*, he says: "Was I not as much concerned for the destruction of the *Greeks* and *Trojans* as any boy of the whole school? Had I not three strokes of a ferula given me, two on my right hand, and one on my left, for calling *Helena* a b * * * * for it? Did any one of you shed more tears for *Hector*? And when king *Priam* came to the camp to beg his body, and returned weeping back to *Troy* without it, —you know, brother, I could not eat my dinner." In all this Sterne doubtless carried back to his school days much of his maturer sentiment; and yet it may be fairly inferred that the characters in the books he read at school were real persons to him in whose adventures he took an active and sympathetic part beyond the habit of most boys. This love for ancient literature was quite sufficient for the master's prophecy, after the whipping, that Laurence possessed talents that would bring him to preferment.

Between school and university intervened for Sterne a period of uncertainty. By 1731 at the latest he should have been ready for Cambridge. But just at this time news reached him of his father's death in the West Indies; and the boy, then in his eighteenth year, was left "without one shilling in the world." His mother in much distress came over from Ireland; and after scant courtesy from her husband's relatives, she returned to Clonmel with her pension of £20, barely sufficient for the support of herself and Catherine, whom she kept with her. Any aid to her son was out of the question. The next year his uncle Richard, "being somewhat infirm in body," started for York and fell dead at Bradford. By his will* made a few weeks before his death, Richard Sterne bequeathed his royalty

* Signed September 11, and proved October 25, 1732.—York Registry of Wills.

and estate at Elvington and all his estates at Ovenden, Halifax, and Hipperholme to his eldest son Richard by Dorothy Lister; and to a younger son Timothy by Esther Booth, were bequeathed Woodhouse and all his lands within the parish of Skircoat. Timothy, then only a boy, afterwards married and settled at Woodhouse Hall, where, surrounded by horses and dogs, he developed into a squire of the kind one may read about in Addison and Fielding. Laurence never mentioned Timothy, probably because he was under no obligation to him. Richard, the eldest son and chief heir, barely twenty-five years old at his father's death, also soon married and took up his residence at Elvington. Between Richard and Laurence there must have been much in common, for the humorist, in spite of differences that sprang up later in life, always spoke with respect and affection of his cousin at Elvington. He became, said Sterne in reviewing his career, "a father to me"; to his protection "I chiefly owe what I now am"; and but for his aid, "I should have been driven out naked into the world, young as I was, and to have shifted for myself as well as I could."

The substantial service for which Sterne expressed this profound gratitude was an allowance of £30 a year towards his expenses at the university. After drifting about for several months, he went up to Cambridge, says the memoir, in 1732, but the date is clearly a slip in memory by a full year. He was enrolled, according to the record of it, as a sizar at Jesus College on July 6, 1733. The choice of this college out of all others at Cambridge was most natural, for his uncle Jaques and his master at Halifax, whether Mr. Sharpe or Mr. Lister, were both educated there; and his great-grandfather, Archbishop Sterne, had been one of its masters and generous benefactors. As in everything else connected with Sterne some fact or incident will appear out of the usual order, so it is with the official records of him at Cambridge. Fashioned himself unlike other men, it is as if all who had to do with him, whether closely or at a distance, were infected by his own strange courses. In his day sizars were admitted to Jesus College and elsewhere only after "being examined and approved." *Examinatus et approbatus* is the stereotyped formula. But no examination was required of Sterne. He was admitted "in his ab-

sence," reads the entry, "with the assent of Master and Fellows."

Moreover, the official who enrolled him put down his name as *Henricus* instead of *Laurentius*, and described him as a native of York, either by mistake or by the direction of the master. The next year—on July 30, 1734—Sterne, then in residence, was elected, after being duly sworn, to one of the scholarships founded by his great-grandfather "for natives of Yorkshire and Nottingham," though, as he was born in Ireland, he did not possess the necessary qualifications. Of these curious irregularities, the readiest explanation is that before Laurence was entered at Cambridge, his cousin Richard of Elvington had come to some agreement with the Master of Jesus, whereby all technicalities relative to birth-place and examination were to be waived in consideration of the young man's descent from Archbishop Sterne. The boy could not have been accorded greater favors had he been the son of a nobleman. For some reason—perhaps because of the fee—Sterne deferred matriculation in the university until March 29, 1735, nearly two years after he came into residence.

The Master of Jesus was Charles Ashton, a quiet scholar known for his studies in classical and patristic literature. Among the learned fellows Sterne had as his first tutor Charles Cannon, a young man about thirty years old. Cannon died in the winter of 1734-5 and Sterne was then transferred to Lynford Caryl, afterwards Master of Jesus, distinguished, said one who knew him, for affable manners, regular life, "unimpeachable integrity," and "a balanced precision and a sententious brevity of expression." Of Dr. Caryl, who guided him through the greater part of his studies, Sterne wrote thirty years later: "He was my tutor when I was at College, and a very good kind of man. He used to let me have my way, when I was under his direction, and that shewed his sense, for I was born to travel out of the common road, and to get aside from the highway path, and he had sense enough to see it, and not to trouble me with trammels." As a third tutor, Sterne had John Bradshaw, a fellow some six years his senior, who recommended him for his degree. Associated with Sterne under Bradshaw were a certain Thomas Mould, a Peter Tomiano, who failed to take a degree, and Frederick Keller, who be-

came a distinguished fellow of his college and the literary executor of Dr. Ashton. Whether any unusual friendship existed between Sterne and Keller is not known; but it is interesting to observe in passing that the two men were prepared for their examinations by the same tutor.

Sterne, with his family pride, could not have been fully at ease in his position in the university. Sizars, to be sure, then performed no menial services at Cambridge; the time was past when they were required, as Eachard complains, to fetch water, sweep chambers, and make beds for their superiors; and the line was no longer fast drawn between them and the pensioners and fellow-commoners above them. There were nevertheless social and other distinctions which would be felt and resented by a sensitive nature. With no tassels to their caps, unlucky sizars wore in clear view the badge of poverty. Sterne's allowance from his cousin, with the £10 a year that he received from his scholarship, sufficed no more than for the essentials of maintenance and clothing. Gentleman then commonly spent thrice that sum. Without running into debt there could have been for Sterne no luxuries nor suppers and wine parties, such as were expected of youngsters from good families. Under the circumstances Sterne did exactly as one would expect of him: he borrowed money, from what source he does not say, and sought congenial companions here and there among the men who, in the university scale, ranked socially above him.

The names of but two of these friends have escaped oblivion. One was John Fountayne of Melton Manor, South Yorkshire, who was enrolled at St. Catharine's Hall. He was afterwards elected Dean of York and then he and Sterne were again placed in very intimate relations. Each, as will be duly related, came to the aid of the other in a noisy church quarrel which gave Sterne local reputation for a smart and witty pen. The other friend was John Hall, who some years later added Stevenson to his name and inherited Skelton Castle, over on the Yorkshire coast near Saltburn-by-the-Sea. He is the "dear cousin Antony" of numerous letters and the discreet Eugenius of *Tristram Shandy*, who warns Yorick against "unwary pleasantry," lest it bring him into "scrapes and difficulties" out of which no after-wit can extricate him. Five years younger

than Sterne, Hall-Stevenson entered Jesus College as a fellow-commoner in 1735. Though the two men were together at Cambridge for only a year and a half, that time was long enough for a close friendship "which ever after . . . continued one and indivisible through life."

Hall-Stevenson was, as described by one who recollects him at college, "an ingenious young gentleman and in person very handsome." And so he appears in the fine portrait of him in velvet and lace that still hangs at Skelton. He was also an idler and decadent much given to the perusal of Rabelais and other facetious books in the French tongue. To Hall-Stevenson, Sterne was undoubtedly indebted for his first acquaintance with the great master of French humor. The two young men used to sit together under the large walnut tree that shaded the inner court of Jesus College, not we may be sure "to study," as the York anecdote relates it, but to read the common lounging-books, which in those days included, among others besides Rabelais, jest books, Aphra Behn's novels, Lord Rochester's poems, and the plays of Wycherley and Congreve. This old walnut tree they aptly called the Tree of Knowledge, inasmuch as they learned of good and evil while resting beneath its shadow.

Sterne's associations with Hall-Stevenson would seem to be ample warrant for the tradition that he "was careless and inattentive to his book," that is, to the prescribed studies; that "he laughed a great deal, and sometimes took the diversion of puzzling his tutors." But such a summary in a phrase or two is inexact and incomplete. Sterne's main quarrel with the learned society of fellows and tutors of Jesus College, as set forth in *Tristram Shandy*, was that they were mere men of reading, who with their slight knowledge of the world thought that "wisdom can speak in no other language than Greek and Latin." "There is a husk and shell," he said of pedagogues, preceptors, tutors and gerund-grinders, "which grows up with learning, which their unskilfulness knows not how to fling away." But among these unskilled scholars he did not include without reserve his own tutors, one of whom he took pains to describe not only as "a very good kind of man" but as "worthy." The ancient poets and historians that Sterne read while at Cambridge, he always mentioned and

quoted with delight. Homer and Vergil, which were continued at college, he never tired of. Theocritus and Pindar charmed him for “the sweetness of the numbers” and “the musical placing of the words.” Of the historians he liked best Thucydides, Herodotus, and Livy; while his praise of Tacitus was rather measured. The decisive style of Tacitus, he thought, overshot the mark, outwitting both author and reader. Eloquence, wherever found, always appealed to Sterne strongly. But when he came to the dry bones of literary theory, rhetoric, logic, and metaphysics, he was simply amused that intellect should employ itself in that way. All these studies, which entered largely into the curriculum, he turned in after-time to banter and gay ridicule. The only rhetorician that he ever praised freely is Longinus, whom he declared “the best critic the eastern world ever produced.” That admiration was based, it is quite clear, not so much upon the real worth of what Longinus wrote as upon his grand style. All the rest were his game. Near the opening of *Tristram Shandy* he begins his sport with those directions to writers which Horace laid down in the *Art of Poetry*. “I shall”—says Sterne there, shifting the figurative meaning of the phrase to the literal—“I shall start out, as Mr. Horace would have me, *ab ovo*; but beyond that I shall follow no rules of the ancients.” Later on he has a fling at the Latin translation of Aristotle’s *Poetics* which he read at college, explaining in lively banter the various parts of a drama—*protasis, epitasis, catastasis, catastrophe* or *peripetia*—which grow out of one another in the order the critic first planted them, and “without which a tale had better never be told at all.”

Perhaps Sterne overflows most in ridicule when he turns to logic. In his day the students at Cambridge were supposed to read the Latin manual on logic written by Francis Burgesdicius, sometime professor at Leyden, and the Dutch commentators thereon. Formal logic also then pervaded the instruction not only in mathematics but also in physics and moral philosophy. Sterne evidently had great contempt for the exercises wherein he was required to defend or oppose according to the stiff and rigid rules of logic a thesis drawn from one of these subjects. The academical dispute seemed to him only an adroit manipulation of words and phrases. This attitude of his to-

wards logic is summed up in the character and sayings of the elder Shandy, in whom nature blended her own rhetoric and logic without the aid of the schools. When the country squire—in an imaginary scene, which may have a faint counterpart in a visit of his own with his uncle or cousin Richard—went up to Cambridge to enter his son at Jesus College, the fellows and tutors whom he met there could not understand how a man that had never heard a single lecture on the Dutch logicians should be able to talk and reason as cleverly as themselves. The squire seemed to be aware, as well as the respondents and opponents whom they trained for the Public Acts, that a disputant should aim, not to convince, but to silence the man against him. It was known to him, as well as to Burgersdicius and his disciples, that “every thesis and hypothesis have an offspring of propositions; and each proposition has its own consequences and conclusions; every one of which leads the mind on again into fresh tracks of enquiries and doubttings.” Mr. Shandy was also afflicted, just as were they, with “the commonplace infirmity of the greatest mathematicians,” who work “with might and main at the demonstration, and so wasting all their strength upon it, . . . have none left in them to draw the corollary, to do good with.”

It was the opinion of Mr. Shandy that the English schoolboy began his studies too late and was kept at them too long. Listen to the squire as he enumerates to a company gathered at Shandy Hall the stages that Sterne himself passed through from the cradle to the Bachelor’s degree:

“Five years with a bib under his chin;

“Four years in travelling from Christ-cross-row to Malachi;

“A year and a half in learning to write his own name;

“Seven long years and more *τυπτω*-ing it, at Greek and Latin;

“Four years at his *probations* and his *negations*—the fine statue still lying in the middle of the marble block,—and nothing done, but his tools sharpened to hew it out!—’Tis a piteous delay!—Was not the great *Julius Scaliger* within an ace of never getting his tools sharpened at all?——Forty-four years old was he before he could manage his Greek;—and *Peter Damianus*, lord bishop of *Ostia*, as all the world

knows, could not so much as read, when he was of man's estate.—And *Baldus* himself, as eminent as he turned out after, entered upon the law so late in life, that every body imagined he intended to be an advocate in the other world: no wonder, when *Eudamidas*, the son of *Archidamas*, heard *Xenocrates* at seventy-five disputing about *wisdom*, that he asked gravely, —*If the old man be yet disputing and enquiring concerning wisdom,—what time will he have to make use of it?*”

Mr. Shandy would have none of this delay in the education of his son Tristram, and so set about to discover “a Northwest passage to the intellectual world.” He found it in a running dance with the auxiliary verbs. By conjugating *have*, *do*, *shall*, *will*, etc., with a variety of nouns and pronouns, affirmatively, negatively, interrogatively, and hypothetically, it was shown conclusively that a young gentleman might be taught in a few lessons “to discourse with plausibility upon any subject, *pro* and *con*, and to say and write all that could be spoken or written concerning it, without blotting a word, to the admiration of all who beheld him.” This is the key to all knowledge, the *ars magna*, says Sterne, that Raymond Lully and numerous scholastics have long sought for in vain. Once in the secret of it, a man may talk on forever about things and entities whereof he knows nothing. The great art was especially commended by Sterne to college tutors whose business it might be to provide topics in logic for the young gentlemen who come under their charge. He could assure them to a certainty that there was nothing like the use of the auxiliaries for setting “the soul a-going by herself upon the materials as they are brought to her.” “By the versability of this great engine, round which they are twisted,” may be opened, he declared, “new tracks of enquiry,” and every idea be made to “engender millions.”

The light of a new age in science and speculation was beginning to break upon Cambridge while Sterne was there. For some time Newton, Hobbes, Locke, and various modern historians and publicists had formed part of the usual course of reading.* To these writers Sterne took strong likes and dis-

* For the reading prescribed and recommended at Cambridge in Sterne's time, see Christopher Wordsworth, *Scholæ Academicæ* (Cambridge, 1877). Compare with Sterne, John Eachard's burlesque of the

likes. Pufendorf's immense work on the *Law of Nature* was not forgotten by the humorist when he came to describe in *Tristram Shandy* the incontestable rights of the Homunculus which the eminent jurist had forgotten to enumerate. Clüver, the German historian and geographer, he regarded as a pedant, who spent his time in trying to ascertain where the Goths and other Germanic tribes were first seated and so had nothing to say about their manners and customs. Why, asks Sterne in *Tristram Shandy*, did not "the learned Cluverius" mention in his *Germania Antiqua*, the wise custom among the Goths "of debating every thing of importance to their state, twice; that is,—once drunk, and once sober:—Drunk—that their councils might not want vigor;—and sober—that they might not want discretion." That story, Sterne would say, is more interesting than the geography of the country between the Vistula and the Oder. On the other hand Sterne admired Newton at a distance. Of Hobbes he knew enough to allude to that quaint title-page of the *Leviathan* whereon is depicted graphically the horns of a dilemma, upon which hang syllogisms of various sorts while masters and students stand about in their gowns. Finally, Sterne could never cease praising the author of the *Essay on the Human Understanding*. After all his wanderings in logic and metaphysics, he discovered in the great Locke, the sagacious Locke, a writer who really knew what passes in a man's mind, and one whose search was ever after truth, not after adroit and dishonest means for defending propositions that every one knows must be false. The famous essay became Sterne's companion to the end of life and colored much of his own thinking.

Sterne received his degrees from Jesus College in due course, graduating B.A. in January, 1736-7, and M.A. at commencement in July, 1740. When he appeared for his first degree he could not have been included—needless to say, perhaps—among "the hard reading men" of the type of Frederick Keller. But he had read, as we have seen, the books that he was expected to know; and they were tucked away in memory university curriculum in *The Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy* (London, 1670, reprinted for Arber's English Garnet, VII).

ready for his purposes when needed. An old anecdotist likely guessed the truth, if he had no authority for the statement, when he said that Sterne had a way of puzzling his tutors. But it was, we may be sure, only the good-natured banter of a man "who loved a jest in his heart." We miss greatly some authentic account of the impression that Sterne made upon his tutors and associates. On this point there is nothing beyond what was current thirty years after. It was then said that "Sterne left Cambridge with the character of an odd man, that had no harm in him; and who had parts if he would use them." A portrait of a beautiful youth by Allan Ramsay, believed to be Sterne at the age of twenty-seven, when he came up for his Master's degree, now hangs, as was said earlier, near Coleridge, in the hall of Jesus College. It is an oval face in the freshness of youth, such as Sterne himself admired, with full eyes and full lips, but hardly suggestive of the humor that was in him.

Sterne was destined for the Church, not because of deep and peculiar piety but because the Church was an obvious career to one who bore his name. On that path awaited him a livelihood and the preferment which his master had prophesied for him while at school. His immediate prospects, however, were far from bright. He began the world, as he often said, with "many difficulties and drawbacks." All along his family had looked upon him as the son of his mother rather than of his father. The annual stipend of £30 from his cousin Richard, inadequate at best, was paid irregularly, and not at all during his last year at Cambridge. So Sterne was compelled to borrow money elsewhere to settle his university debts. The expense of his food and clothing for the nine years at the Halifax grammar school was also charged up, he was now to discover, against him to be paid as soon as he should be able. From the first he had been a delicate boy like most of his father's children who had been left by the way one after another. In stature above middle height, he was slim and hollow-chested. A dread disease lurking in his blood became manifest near the close of his residence at Cambridge. One night he was startled out of sleep by a hemorrhage of the lungs, "bleeding," he says, "the bed full." Fortunately, Sterne possessed a

buoyant nature which could win the race against debts and consumption.*

* The following are the original entries relative to Sterne in the register of Jesus College:

Under July 6, 1733:

Henricus Sterne Eboracensis absens admissus est in Ordinem Sizatorum cum consensu Magistri & Sociorum sub Tute suo M^{ro} Cannon.

Under July 30, 1734:

Laurentius Sterne electus est et admissus, prius juratus, Exhibitionarius Episcopi Eboracensis in locum Dⁿⁱ Hall.

Under January 14, 1736-7:

Eodem etiam die Fredericus Keller, Petrus Tomiano, Laurence Sterne & Thomas Mould habuerunt veniam sibi concessam petendi gratiam ab Academia ad respondendum Quæstioni, spondente M^{ro} Bradshaw.

Under August 4, 1737:

Literæ Testimoniales concessæ sunt D^{no} Sterne.

Henricus in the first entry was afterwards deleted for *Laurentius*; *Arch* was also written before *Episcopi* in the second entry. *Arch*, of course, should be *Archi*. *M^{ro}* is an abbreviation for *Magistro*; and *Dⁿⁱ* an abbreviation for *Domini*.

“The Ramsay portrait,” Mr. Arthur Gray, Vice-Master of Jesus College, informed me in 1908, “was presented to the college by one of the Fellows, Mr. Hugh Shield, K.C., a few years ago. It is traditionally and, I believe, correctly said to be a portrait of Sterne in his youth and is unquestionably by Allan Ramsay.”

C H A P. II.

Marriage and Settlement at Sutton-in-the-Forest.

1737-1744

I.

AFTER obtaining his Bachelor's degree, Sterne immediately entered upon his career in the Church. On Sunday, March 6, he was duly admitted, among other candidates, to the order of deacons by Richard Reynolds, the Bishop of Lincoln, "being very well recommended," according to the customary formula, "for his exemplary life, good morals and virtuous qualities, and well instructed in the study and knowledge of sound learning." The scene of this general ordination was the chapel of Buckden Hall near Huntingdon, long since in ruins, but then the palatial residence of the diocese. On the same day, Sterne was licensed by the Bishop of Lincoln to the curacy of St. Ives, five miles to the east of Huntingdon.

St. Ives is an ancient market-town, which then consisted mainly of a single row of houses straggling along the north-eastern bank of the slow-moving Ouse. In the rear was a cattle market, and beyond were farms extending out into the fens, one of which, "a stagnant flat tract of land," was cultivated for five years by Oliver Cromwell. All Saints, where Sterne officiated, is a light and handsome church in the perpendicular style, overlooking the sleepy stream, with a lofty spire visible for miles out over the fens. Sterne came to the parish as curate to the vicar, one William Pigott, a graduate of Pembroke College, Cambridge. Perhaps the two men had been acquainted at the university, for the vicar did not receive his Master's degree until 1734. But of this we do not know. No memorials of the young curate of St. Ives longer exist; no entry of his in the parish registry; no tradition of him and his ways. Nothing remains but the bare record of his appointment in the Act Book of the Bishop of Lincoln. At most Sterne trod the flagstones of the ancient church at St. Ives for a year and a half and then passed out to new scenes.

In the meantime, an important change had taken place in the attitude of the Sterne family towards the young man. His cousin Richard apparently broke with him over college debts and soon died before reaching middle life. His uncle Jaques, who had hitherto refused to aid him, now became his patron and gave him a good start in the world, as he well could from his position in the Church of York. This Jaques Sterne, before our memoir has finally done with him, will turn out to be a splendid example, equal to any in Trollope's novels, of the worldly-wise ecclesiastic who strives for high place mainly for his own comfort and aggrandisement. Without possessing the solid character of the old archbishop bearing the family name, he was proud, blustering, and bigoted, and withal totally devoid of humor.

Graduating at Jesus College, Bachelor of Arts in 1714, and Master of Arts in 1718, Jaques Sterne was ordained to the ministry in December, 1720, at Bishopthorpe, the palace of the Archbishop of York. On February 5, 1722, he was instituted Vicar of Rise, a small parish near the coast in the East Riding of Yorkshire, to which living was added on May 3, 1729, the neighboring vicarage of Hornsea-cum-Riston. A month before this last appointment he was installed Prebendary of Apesthorpe in York Minster, and was permitted the next year to exchange this prebend for Ulkself. Accompanying his rise, in no way unusual up to this point, Jaques Sterne had received in 1725 the degree of Doctor of Laws from his college. He was henceforth to be known as Dr. Sterne, a title by which he liked to be called. Having once gained a foothold in the Church of York, Dr. Sterne added one dignity to another, never letting slip any that he already had except for something better. In April, 1734, the eager pluralist obtained the rich prebend for South Muskham in the Cathedral Church of Southwell, Nottinghamshire, which brought his annual income well above four hundred pounds. At the time of the appointment, he was too busy at York to appear in person at Southwell, and so the installation was by proxy. He was then in the midst of a fierce parliamentary contest, in which he won the day for the Whig candidate, Mr. Cholmley Turner, whose canvass he personally managed. After this brilliant success against the most stubborn and bitter opposition, Dr. Sterne easily took his

place among those efficient church politicians of the period who were fighting the Whig battles for Walpole. Resigning the prebend of Ulkelf, he was appointed, on the seventeenth of November of the next year, Canon Residentiary and Precentor to York Minster, and Archdeacon of Cleveland. There was nothing further for him to ask for at present except a bishopric, but that could not be granted him.*

The motives that led Dr. Sterne to take up his nephew after years of neglect, one need not go far to seek. Laurence was no longer a helpless child whose education would be a drain upon the purse. He had made his way through the university, thereby displaying the Sterne energy and talents and proving himself the son of Roger Sterne rather than of a poor woman who followed the army in Flanders. No doubt Jaques Sterne thought it his duty to help along a member of his family who might come to something; but it is clear, in the light of subsequent events, that he mainly sought in his nephew a subservient tool for furthering his own ambitions. Clever politician as he was, he would first make him and then use him as an understrapper. What happened when the young man thoroughly understood this, would be, I daresay, interesting reading, if only we had the full details of the encounter. But all that, with the few details we have, is for a later story. Peace reigned for some years. Pursuant to the plans agreed upon by uncle and nephew, Laurence Sterne, having left St. Ives, was admitted to the priesthood, by Samuel Peploe, Bishop of Chester, at a special ordination held in the Cathedral Church of Chester, on Sunday, August 20, 1738. Four days later Lancelot Blackburne, the Archbishop of York, conferred upon him the vicarage of Sutton-in-the-Forest, within the archdeaconry of Cleveland. The next day he was formally inducted into the living by Richard Musgrave, the curate of Marton, with Philip Harland, the squire of the parish, as one of the witnesses.†

* For Jaques Sterne, see especially Le Neve and Hardy, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanæ* (Oxford, 1854); and G. Paulson, *History of Holderness* (Hull, 1890).

† All of Sterne's ordination papers with endorsements now repose in the British Museum (Additional Charters, 16158-16166). The information contained in these papers has been supplemented by an examina-

Sutton-in-the-Forest is a small village eight miles or more to the north of the city of York. As one comes upon the hamlet from York, the road suddenly turns to the right, running almost due east. On the north side stood, as it now stands, the little stone church with square tower, dedicated to All Saints, and beyond was the parsonage hidden away among shrubbery. From his gate, Sterne looked directly across upon the grange of Squire Harland, while on either side of the road was a row of cottages with small enclosures; and in various directions lanes led away to scattered farmsteads. The vicarage, which included the entire township of Sutton and of Huby to the west, extended over an area of nearly eleven thousand acres. It had formerly been known as Sutton-in-Galtres, for it lay at the heart of the immense Forest of Galtres, which stretched north to the ancient Isurium and south to the very walls of York. For centuries a royal hunting ground wherein the old kings "pursued the wild boar, the wolf, and other beasts of prey with which it was infested," the ancient forest is now chiefly remembered, outside of local history, as the scene where Shakespeare's John of Lancaster met the northern rebels under Richard Scroop, Archbishop of York, and after persuading him to disband his power, treacherously broke faith with him, ordering his arrest and immediate execution. "It was," says Thomas Gill's *Vallis Eboracensis*, "in many places thick and shady with lofty trees and underwood, and in others wet and flat, full of bogs and moorish quagmires." In 1670 Parliament passed an Act for enclosing this wild waste; whereupon began those changes and improvements which have since converted Galtres into a rich and fruitful plain of meadows and pastures. In Sterne's time this transformation was not complete. Much of the forest had been levelled, meadows had been drained, and bogs had been filled up, but there yet remained many fields and large tracts of common land that had not been brought under the plough. If no longer in the forest, the hamlet of Sutton still lay within one of its old clearings which ran off in all directions into barren moors and marshes with woods beyond.

The only attraction which this parish in the wilderness
tion of the Institutions of the Diocese of York and the Acts of the Dean
and Chapter.

could have had for Sterne was the £40 a year that it put into his purse. He probably never expected to go into permanent residence. For the next three years he stayed mostly at York, it would seem, driving out to Sutton sometimes for Sunday service and the business of his parish. On one of these occasions, the vicar took down the parish registry, and, before entering a marriage or baptism, sprawled in large letters across the page LAURENCE STERNE, much as he had done on the ceiling of the Halifax grammar school. The first entry in his hand, it may be interesting to note, was the marriage of John Newstead of Huby and Mary Wilkinson of Stillington, on Easter Tuesday, Anno Domini 1739. But most of the records for this year, and all of them, I think, for 1740 are signed by Richard Wilkinson, a young man in deacon's orders, whom Sterne placed over the parish. Mr. Wilkinson was at Sutton on a slightly irregular appointment, merely as Sterne's assistant, for his license to the cure bears the date of December 17, 1740. His parish duties provided for, Sterne likely kept close to York, by the sources of pleasure and ecclesiastical preferment. Vacancies were then filled so promptly that candidates unless near at hand stood no chance of winning. On January 12, 1740-41, the prebend of Givendale in York Cathedral was resigned by the incumbent for the chancellorship, and five days later Sterne was in possession of the stall. Thenceforth he became a member of the York Chapter and took his turns at preaching in the great minster. "He sat down quietly," says the contemporary account, "in the lap of the church; and if it was not yet covered with a fringed cushion, 'twas not naked."

At that time York was in truth as in name the metropolis of the north. Many country gentlemen made it their residence the year through, while others came in for the winter with their families. Provisions of all sorts were cheap and plentiful and hospitality abounded. Those who could not afford houses of their own went into lodgings or put up at one of the inns, of which the George in Coney Street was the meeting place of gentlemen to talk politics, confer with their lawyers, make and sign contracts, and nominate for mayor or member of Parliament. Near by was Sunton's Coffee-House, one of several coffee-houses at York, and Sterne's favorite resort for

gossip or a convivial evening with the club to which he belonged. During the season, which began in November, there were, says Defoe, who included York in one of his tours, "assemblies, music-meetings or some entertainment every night in the week"; while for a week in May and August a concourse of people, including the neighboring and distant nobility and gentry, poured into the city from all sides for the amusements of "the great races," held on the field of Knavesmire, then one of the best courses in England. Chance visitors at the races in Sterne's day were amazed at the prodigious sums lost and won or left behind for lodgings, the theatre, and subscription balls. For those who required greater excitement than watching Antelope and Grenadier* run for his Majesty's purse of a hundred guineas, there was provided, twice a day during the week of the races and frequently at other times, a main of cocks with bye-battles,† between the gentlemen of York and the gentlemen of Halifax, Bradford, or some other respectable town of the north.

York had also her own company of players, chosen with a "particular care . . . to their private life that they might be as sociable off the stage, as entertaining upon it." They had long performed in one of the cockpits, but by the time Sterne came to York, they were moving into their theatre in the Mint Yard, modelled after those of London. There Sterne had an opportunity to see the whole range of the English drama from Shakespeare and Jonson down to a comic opera founded upon local scene and character.‡ And not far from the theatre were the Assembly Rooms, the very centre of fashion. The building, which was designed after Palladio by that Earl of Burlington to whom Pope and Gay paid generous compliment, was then regarded as very beautiful, though it now appears heavy and dingy enough. It contained a spacious and showy hall ornamented in the antique Egyptian manner, and six other rooms, all of which, writes Defoe, were "finely illuminated with lustres of an extraordinary size and magnificence."§ To visitors of more sentiment than Defoe the overhanging lights

* *York Courant*, August 11, 1752.

† *Ibid.*, August 13, 1751.

‡ *York Courant* under various dates.

§ *Tour of Great Britain*, III, 125-126 (London, 1738).

on the evening of a concert or ball but revealed the brilliant scene below. "The ladies," said a correspondent of *St. James's Chronicle*,* "who vied in splendour with each other, I thought would never be tired of dancing, for some began on Monday and continued till Saturday night." And so it was at the theatre. Tate Wilkinson, the actor and mimic, who at a later date sometimes played at York, was dazzled, he says, when his eyes turned towards the boxes; "and no wonder," it is added in explanation, "for as London and Bath cull the choicest beauties from the three kingdoms, so does ancient York city at times allure them from Hull, Leeds, Doncaster, Wakefield, Pontefract, and every part of that noble, spacious and rich country."[†] It is quite easy to see why a young bachelor should have preferred York to a country parish tucked away in a forest clearing.

Among the young women with whom Sterne held sentimental converse at the Assembly Rooms and elsewhere was Miss Elizabeth Lumley, who was accustomed to come to York for the season. As Sterne eventually took Miss Lumley to wife, we should tell what is known of her and her kindred. When he first made her acquaintance, she was occupying genteel lodgings, with her waiting-maid, in Little Alice Lane, a narrow street which under another name still winds away from the south of the Minster Yard to an archway marking one of the old gates to the Cathedral Close. Most of the buildings of the street were pulled down more than a half century ago; but the house where Miss Lumley was wont to take lodgings for the winter may perhaps be identified with St. William's College, originally an ecclesiastical foundation for chantry priests, and afterwards converted into dwellings. It is an ancient and curious structure rambling around a courtyard; while in front a half-timbered upper story projects over one of stone into the street. The main entrance was by a door and wicket ornamented with beautiful tracery. It is a pleasing fancy, if nothing more, that Miss Lumley passed through that traceried doorway on the morning when she stepped over to the cathedral to become Mrs. Sterne. She could not boast, if casual references to her are to be believed, of the beauty that

* August 26-28, 1766.

† *Memoirs*, III, 144-145 (York, 1790).

Tate Wilkinson and other visitors saw in the Yorkshire ladies. She was indeed "but a homely woman," yet possessing grace, vivacity, and a love for music and the diversions of society. She had been well bred, and "possessed," says the antiquary,* "a first rate understanding," which enabled her to help Laurie with his sermons. "She had many admirers," it is said further, "as she was reported to have a fortune." When Sterne began to pay court to her she was twenty-five or twenty-six years old —about a year younger than himself. It was altogether a fitting match, if a man so volatile as Sterne were ever to marry.

Miss Lumley belonged like himself to a good county family. Her father, the Rev. Robert Lumley, was the son of Robert Lumley, Gentleman, of Northallerton, a market-town in the North Riding, by Eleanor, daughter to John Hopton, Esq., of Armley, a suburb of Leeds. His grandmother, on the mother's side, was a sister of Thomas Rymer, the critic and historian. At the age of sixteen Robert Lumley, his father then deceased, entered Trinity College, Cambridge, as a pensioner, where he graduated, Bachelor of Arts in 1710-11, and Master of Arts four years later. Ordained deacon by the Archbishop of York on December 21, 1712, he seems to have obtained a curacy, though I have discovered no record of it, near Armley; most likely at Adel, a few miles to the northwest of the estate of his maternal grandfather. The little church at Adel, with its sculptured porch and chancel arch, is one of the loveliest survivals of Norman architecture in all England. Within the wide parish lay Cookridge Hall, the seat of Thomas Kirke, father and son, each of whom was known as "an ingenious gentleman, and virtuoso in all sorts of learning." They were both Fellows of the Royal Society. Cookridge was then famous in the district and beyond it for a "fine library and museum of antiquities" and for a park and wood laid out in "geometrical lines and centres." Thomas Kirke the younger married Lydia, daughter of Anthony Light of London, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of William Clarke of Merivale Abbey, Warwickshire. Within a year and some months after the marriage, he died at the age of twenty-five; and two years

* John Croft, whose anecdotes of Sterne, to be frequently quoted, have been published by W. A. S. Hewins, *Whitefoord Papers*, 223-235 (Oxford, 1898).

later—on September 24, 1711—the young widow took as her second husband Robert Lumley. Of the marriage were born two daughters, Elizabeth and Lydia, of whom the former was christened in the beautiful Norman church at Adel, October 13, 1714. This is the Elizabeth Lumley who lived to become the wife of Laurence Sterne. By descent from Elizabeth Clarke, twice married, she was cousin to Elizabeth Montagu, the famous “Bluestocking.”*

On January 12, 1720-21, Robert Lumley was admitted to the priesthood, at an unusually advanced period in life, by the Archbishop of York, preparatory to his appointment on October 16 to the vicarage of Bedale, near Northallerton and the home of his childhood. In this old market-town, consisting of one long and wide street with the church of St. Gregory at the upper end of it, he remained until near his death in January or February, 1731-2. Bedale was one of the richest livings in Yorkshire—worth nearly £2000 a year—and so the Lumleys “lived in style,” giving Lydia and Elizabeth “a superior education,” as might be expected of a mother who had enjoyed the comforts and luxuries of Cookridge Hall. It is impossible to follow the migration of the family immediately after the death of the father. But Mrs. Lumley did not long survive her husband. On May 17, 1736, letters of administration of the father’s estate were granted by the Prerogative Court of York to Elizabeth and Lydia Lumley, who are described in the preliminary application as spinsters living at Kendal, in Westmoreland. No inventory of the estate was returned. Soon after the loss of her mother, Lydia married the Reverend John Botham, a Trinity man and son of the vicar of the same name at Clifton-Campville in Staffordshire, where it may be the Lumleys also owned an estate. Mr. Botham, then rector of Yoxall in the same county, was after-

* By her first husband, Anthony Light, Elizabeth Clarke had one daughter—the Lydia who married Thomas Kirke and afterwards Robert Lumley. After the death of Anthony Light she married Thomas Robinson, the grandfather of Elizabeth Robinson (who married Edward Montagu in 1742). Thus Elizabeth Lumley and Elizabeth Montagu had the same grandmother, but different grandfathers. Though they rarely met, they addressed each other as “cousin” in letters that passed between them. Sterne also, after his marriage, claimed the relationship for himself by courtesy.

wards appointed to the vicarage of Albury in Surrey. Lydia died on March 22, 1753, in her thirty-ninth year, and was buried in the ancient parish church within Albury Park. After the marriage of her sister, Elizabeth divided her time between Yoxall and the pleasures of York, settling at length, as said above, for a part of the year under the shadow of the great minster.*

It took Sterne two years to win Miss Lumley. During the first months of the courtship, the lovers shared together the amusements of York and sat down to many a "sentimental repast" in the seclusion of Little Alice Lane, or with their confidante, "the good Miss S—," in a pretty cottage amid roses and jessamines, which from some odd fancy they called D'Estella, perhaps in memory of Stella, the name by which Swift addressed Esther Johnson. It all reads like a little novel, could he have written anything so brief, by Samuel Richardson. Miss Lumley, though she owned she liked Sterne from the first, held him off with the excuse that she was not rich enough or that he was too poor to think of marriage just then. At this stage in the courtship, Miss Lumley went to her sister's in Staffordshire for a long visit extending into the winter, I should say, of 1740-41. Letters of course now passed to and fro. "I wrote to her often," says Sterne. Four of his letters Miss Lumley kept by her through life, doubtless as the ones that pleased her especially well. No one ever wrote love-letters much like them, except in imitation of them. They are studies in emotion, possessing the harmony and cadence of phrase and

* Information concerning the Lumleys and the families into which they married lies scattered in *The Registers of the Parish Church of Adel* (volume V of *Thoresby Society Publications*, 1895); T. D. Whitaker, *Loidis and Elmete* (1816); Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodiensis*, edited by Whitaker (1816); *Register of Marriages in York Minster* (*Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal*, II, 321); and Manning and Bray, *History . . . of Surrey*, II (1809). An etching of the church at Adel is given by H. T. Simpson, *Archæologia Adelensis* (London, 1879). Likewise of Bedale, by H. B. M'Call, *The Early History of Bedale* (London, 1907). I have also been furnished with the entries with reference to Robert Lumley in the Admission Book of Trinity College and the diocesan registries of York and Chester. New material on the Lumleys and Sterne may be found in E. J. Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, two vols. (London, 1906), and R. Blunt, *Mrs. Montagu*, two vols. (London and New York, 1923).

sentence that were to distinguish, a quarter-century later, the *Sentimental Journey* from all other English books.

In the first letter, Sterne, tired of the haunts of men, imagines for himself and Miss Lumley an earthly paradise where the polyanthus blooms in midwinter:

“Yes! I will steal from the world, and not a babbling tongue shall tell where I am—Echo shall not so much as whisper my hiding-place—suffer thy imagination to paint it as a little sun-gilt cottage, on the side of a romantic hill—dost thou think I will leave love and friendship behind me? No! they shall be my companions in solitude, for they will sit down and rise up with me in the amiable form of my L—. We will be as merry and as innocent as our first parents in Paradise, before the arch fiend entered that undescribable scene.

“The kindest affections will have room to shoot and expand in our retirement, and produce such fruit as madness, and envy, and ambition have always killed in the bud.—Let the human tempest and hurricane rage at a distance, the desolation is beyond the horizon of peace.—My L. has seen a polyanthus blow in December—some friendly wall has sheltered it from the biting wind.—No planetary influence shall reach us, but that which presides and cherishes the sweetest flowers. God preserve us! How delightful this prospect in idea! We will build, and we will plant, in our own way—simplicity shall not be tortured by art—we will learn of nature how to live—she shall be our alchymist, to mingle all the good of life into one salubrious draught.—The gloomy family of care and distrust shall be banished from our dwelling, guarded by thy hand and tutelar deity—we will sing our choral songs of gratitude, and rejoice to the end of our pilgrimage.

“Adieu, my L. Return to one who languishes for thy society.”

The second letter strikes a more personal note in the account of Sterne’s dreadful state after Miss Lumley’s departure to her sister. Sterne fell into a fever, and the confidante, hearing of it, tried to console with him, with the result that they both broke down under the pressure of their emotions. Sterne took Miss Lumley’s lodgings in Little Alice Lane during her absence, but he could neither eat nor sleep until Fanny, the house-maid, had braced his nerves with hartshorn:

"You bid me tell you, my dear L., how I bore your departure for S——, and whether the valley where D'Estella stands, retains still its looks—or, if I think the roses or jessamines smell as sweet, as when you left it—Alas! everything has now lost its relish and look! The hour you left D'Estella, I took to my bed.—I was worn out by fevers of all kinds, but most by that fever of the heart with which thou knowest well I have been wasting these two years—and shall continue wasting till you quit S——. The good Miss S——, from the forebodings of the best of hearts, thinking I was ill, insisted upon my going to her.—What can be the cause, my dear L., that I never have been able to see the face of this mutual friend, but I feel myself rent to pieces? She made me stay an hour with her, and in that short space I burst into tears a dozen different times—and in such affectionate gusts of passion, that she was constrained to leave the room, and sympathize in her dressing-room—I have been weeping for you both, said she, in a tone of the sweetest pity—for poor L.'s heart, I have long known it—her anguish is as sharp as yours—her heart as tender—her constancy as great—her virtue as heroic—Heaven brought you not together to be tormented. I could only answer her with a kind look, and a heavy sigh—and returned home to your lodgings (which I have hired till your return), to resign myself to misery—Fanny had prepared me a supper—she is all attention to me—but I sat over it with tears; a bitter sauce, my L., but I could eat it with no other—for the moment she began to spread my little table, my heart fainted within me.—One solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass!—I gave a thousand pensive, penetrating looks at the chair thou hadst so often graced, in those quiet and sentimental repasts—then laid down my knife and fork, and took out my handkerchief, and clapped it across my face, and wept like a child.—I do so this very moment, my L.; for, as I take up my pen, my poor pulse quickens, my pale face glows, and tears are trickling down upon the paper, as I trace the word L——. O thou! blessed in thyself, and in thy virtues—blessed to all that know thee—to me most so, because more do I know of thee than all thy sex.—This is the philtre, my L., by which thou hast charmed me, and by which thou wilt hold me thine, whilst virtue and faith hold this world together.—This, my friend, is the plain and simple

magic, by which I told Miss —— I have won a place in that heart of thine, on which I depend so satisfied, that time, or distance, or change of everything which might alarm the hearts of little men, create no uneasy suspense in mine—Wast thou to stay in S—— these seven years, thy friend, though he would grieve, scorns to doubt, or to be doubted—’tis the only exception where security is not the parent of danger.—I told you poor Fanny was all attention to me since your departure—contrives every day bringing in the name of L. She told me last night (upon giving me some hartshorn), she had observed my illness began the very day of your departure for S——; that I had never held up my head, had seldom, or scarce ever, smiled, had fled from all society—that she verily believed I was broken-hearted, for she had never entered the room, or passed by the door, but she heard me sigh heavily—that I neither eat, or slept, or took pleasure in anything as before—judge then, my L., can the valley look so well—or the roses and jessamines smell so sweet as heretofore? Ah me!—But adieu!—the vesper bell calls me from thee to my God!”

During the correspondence, Miss Lumley entered complaint against her lover and their common friends at York that they were neglecting her. Letters, no doubt, as was Sterne’s way, were not so frequent as they had been. In two letters Sterne pleaded for mercy at “the amiable tribunal” of pity, promising never to offend after. For her benefit he moralized prettily on the art of the coquette, the family affections, and the death of his dear friends. As an index to his reading at the time, we may observe, in addition to Eve’s bower in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, an apparent allusion to the *Beggar’s Opera* and a quotation from the *Essay on Man*, though not written out, as if Miss Lumley were thoroughly familiar with the moral essay of the great poet. Winter was breaking, he finally told Miss Lumley, and she must come to York for the spring. “Return—return—” was the burden, “the birds of Yorkshire will tune their pipes, and sing as melodiously as those of Staffordshire.”

The summons was heeded. What occurred afterwards Sterne himself related for his daughter Lydia. At her return, says the memoir, Miss Lumley “fell into a consumption—and one evening that I was sitting by her with an almost broken

heart to see her so ill, she said, ‘My dear Laurey, I can never be yours for I verily believe I have not long to live—but I have left you every shilling of my fortune’;—upon that she shewed me her will—this generosity overpowered me. It pleased God that she recovered, and I married her in the year 1741.’ The fortune that could not be resisted had just come to Elizabeth and Lydia Lumley as heirs at law to the real estate of a distant and unknown relative who had recently died intestate at Leeds. Elizabeth’s share in the income from the houses and lands amounted to thirty or forty pounds a year. When Eliza told Laurey about it, he took her and her fortune* on the impulse of the moment, just as his father before him had taken the widow of a brother officer. The pathetic scene we have described occurred, it is said, in the Assembly Rooms; “whence they went off directly . . . and were married.” However that may be, the story closes with the terse record in the registry of York Minster that the Rev. Laurence Sterne and Miss Elizabeth Lumley of Little Alice Lane were married, under special license, on Easter Monday, March 30, 1741, by Richard Osbaldeston, Dean of the York Chapter. The romance which was thus quickly shuffled to a conclusion, like the last act of a play, had developed in Sterne a peculiar emotional state, to describe which he was the first of all writers to employ the epithet sentimental.† Had he then possessed the motive and matter for it, he might have written his *Sentimental Journey*.

Miss Lumley’s marriage to a York prebendary rather amused Elizabeth Robinson (not yet Mrs. Montagu), who first heard of it from her brother Matthew, then drinking the waters at Bath. “Harry Goddard,” he wrote to her, “is here, and informs me that our cousin Betty Lumley is married to a Parson who once delighted in debauchery, who is possessed of about £100 a year in preferment, and has a good prospect of more. What hopes our relation may have of settling the affec-

* E. J. Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, I, 84-85.

† See, however, Boissy’s *Le Français à Londres*, a one-act prose comedy first performed in 1727. The heroine says of love that it is in England *un commerce de sentimens* (Scene II). From this it is not a far step to Sterne’s “sentimental commerce” or “sentimental repasts.” In 1764, he “invented” the word *sentimentalize* for “Dr. Johnson’s service.”—*Original Letters*, 14 (London, 1788).

tions of a light and fickle man I know not, but I imagine she will set about it not by means of the beauty but of the arm of flesh. In other respects I see no fault in the match." Some days later, came a letter from Mrs. Sterne herself, telling her all about her illness, her marriage, and her love. Miss Robinson immediately passed the news on to her sister Sally, who was convalescing from a severe illness: "I never saw a more comical letter than my sweet cousin's, with her heart and head full of matrimony, pray do matrimonial thoughts come upon *your recovery?* for she seems to think it a symptom. . . . Mr. Sterne has a hundred a year living, with a good prospect of better preferment. He was a great rake, but being japanned* and married, has varnished his character. . . . What a wonderful occupation she made of courtship that it left her no leisure nor inclination to think of any thing else. I wish they may live well together.†

II.

STRAIGHTWAY after marriage, Sterne prepared to occupy his living at Sutton-in-the-Forest; by midsummer he was settled there with his bride. The "little sun-gilt cottage on a romantic hill" that he had dreamed of in his correspondence with Miss Lumley proved to be "a large ruinous house," which could be rendered habitable only after "great repairs." Under his predecessor, the late Rev. John Walker, it had been totally neglected and was ready to fall. Sterne's income at this time was hardly eighty pounds a year, Sutton being estimated at forty pounds and Givendale at some odd pounds short of that. Out of that sum Sterne was paying a curate. His wife, however, true to her promise, placed in her husband's hands—his honor laid as surety—her little fortune. This additional income enabled Sterne to renovate his parsonage; but like others who have made over old houses, he found the expense of it greater than had been anticipated. When he had done with the repairs, he recorded his emotions, along with the items of cost, in the following entry on the inside of one of the covers to his parish registry:

* Suggested by the color of his clerical dress.

† E. J. Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, I, 73-74.



Laurence Sterne

From the pastels by Francis Cotes

Elizabeth Sterne



	£ s d	
Laid out in Sashing the House,	12 0 0	A. Dom. 1741
In Stukoing And Bricking the Hall	4 16 0	
In Building the Chair House	5 0 0	L. Sterne
In Building the Parl ^r Chimney	3 0 0	Vicar
Little House	2 3 0	
Spent in Shapeing the Rooms, Plastering, Underdrawing & Job- bery—		
God knows what ——————		

It is curious that Sterne should first appear as a jester in this old dog-eared parish book. The dash he drew across the page on bringing the account to a close, leaving it to Omniscience to write in the long row of figures, is whimsical enough for *Tristram Shandy*. Mrs. Sterne's breeding also comes out here unexpectedly. She was to have her dwelling newly sashed after the latest style. The chair-house, too, was for her benefit, that she might keep a carriage for driving about the district or taking a wheel into York to visit her friends. After repairing and rebuilding, came "the entire furnishing" of the rectory at an expense of which Sterne complained, though he gave no details. Their house in order, the vicar and his wife began to lay out "pleasing walks," as they called them, "amid trees, shrubs, and flowers." They were also as curious as Mr. Walter Shandy "in wall-fruit and green gages especially." Their curate, the Rev. Mr. Wilkinson, as it is faithfully recorded in the parish registry, began the improvements by building an arbor, and planting twenty or more elm trees in the large house garden and the churchyard, a few of which may be still standing. Then followed further planting with the necessary enclosures, the details of which Sterne set down in his own hand. The entries run:

Mem^d That the Cherry Trees & Espalier Apple Hedge were planted in y^e Garden October y^e 9, 1742. The Nectarines and Peaches planted the same Day. The Pails set up two months before

I Laid out in the Garden in y^e year 1742, the sum of £8 15s. 6d.
L. Sterne

Laid out in Inclosing the Orchard, & in Apple Trees, &c—in y^e

£ sh d

Year 1743, 5 0 0

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The Apple Trees, Pear & Plum Trees, planted in y^e Orchard y^e
28th day of October, 1743, by L. Sterne.

During this period of planting and repairing, Sutton was visited by two hailstorms, the severity of which Sterne perhaps playfully exaggerated, for we read in the parish book near the end:

In the Year 1741

Hail fell in the midst of Summer as big as a Pidgeon's Egg, w^{ch} unusual Occurrence I thought fit to attest under my hand

L. Sterne

In May 1745

A dismal Storm of Hail fell upon this Town & upon some other adjacent ones, w^{ch} did considerable Damage both to the Windows & Corn. Many of the Stones measured six Inches in Circumference. It broke almost all the South & West Windows, both of this House and my Vicarage at Stillington.

L. Sterne

When Sterne finished his improvements he had made out of Sutton a comfortable retirement, which was to be his home for nearly twenty years. The old rectory, subsequently burned to the ground, lay back from the road to the north, in an orchard of shrubs, fruit, and flowers of his own planting. If his wife's income had been exhausted by the expense of coming into the living, two important preferments more than made up for the loss. On December 26, 1741, the prebend of North Newbald fell vacant by the death of the Rev. Robert Hitch, who had "overheated himself" * in the recent election for members of Parliament. At a meeting of the York Chapter held on the fifth of the following January, Sterne resigned Givendale for the wealthier stall of North Newbald. The formal installation took place on January 8. Besides being worth fully forty pounds a year, the new prebend carried with it a house in Stonegate near the minster, which could be let or used as a town residence.

Adjoining Sutton, two miles to the north, was the vicarage of Stillington, which fell to Sterne on the death of the incumbent, Richard Musgrave, formerly curate of Marton. The

* Thomas Gent, the York printer, *Life, 1741-1755* (London, 1832). Sterne is briefly described.

little church, set high over the hamlet, looks much as it did in Sterne's time. The old box pews remain and the old gallery in the rear is still used. Of the new appointment Sterne said, "By my wife's means I got the living of Stillington—a friend of her's in the south had promised her, that if she married a clergyman in Yorkshire, when the living became vacant, he would make her a compliment of it." The friend in the south who exerted his influence for Sterne was Thomas, Lord Fairfax, who soon afterwards settled in Virginia, where he became associated with the young George Washington.

The details of the appointment which enrolled Sterne among the small pluralists of the period, may be discovered in contemporary records. It is well to give them here. On February 27, 1743-4, the Dean and Chapter of York issued certificates to the Chancellor of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Archbishop of York, praying that Sterne, known for his "good life and conversation" be permitted to hold Stillington along with Sutton. On March 3, the Archbishop of Canterbury signed the dispensation, "being moved by your supplications" and the general considerations that "the greater progress men make in sacred learning, the greater in encouragement they merit, and the more their necessities are in daily life, the more necessary supports of life they require." It was stipulated that Sterne should preach thirteen sermons at Stillington every year, exercise hospitality for two months each year, and in his absence provide a minister for the parish in case the revenues were adequate for the purpose. The dispensation was confirmed by letters-patent of his Majesty on March 6. These preliminaries over, the Rev. Richard Levett, Prebendary of Stillington, who was the patron of the living, presented Sterne's name to Richard Osbaldeston, the Dean of York, who made the appointment on the thirteenth. The next day Sterne was formally inducted into the vicarage by Richard Hanxwell, Vicar of Sheriff-Hutton.*

Stillington added to Sterne's resources another annual forty

* The Richard Levett who nominated him to the living also held a prebend at Southwell. He seems to have been the son of the vicar of the same name at Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, who graduated at Christ's College, Oxford, in 1697, and subsequently served as curate to his father.

pounds. He could now live comfortably and at ease. So near was Stillington to Sutton that it was not necessary for him to engage a curate for the new parish. At the same time Mr. Wilkinson found another field of labor; and for several years Sterne either performed alone the duties of two parishes or employed curates who had not reached the dignity of a bishop's license. He had, however, a trustworthy and obedient parish-clerk, whom he facetiously called "my sinful Amen." It was Sterne's custom to preach at Sutton on Sunday morning and to stroll over to Stillington for an afternoon service, using very likely the same sermon, for Sterne was not the man to expend unnecessary energy upon his parishioners. Once, said the brother of the squire of Stillington, as Sterne "was going over the fields on a Sunday to preach at Stillington, it happened that his pointer dog sprung a covey of partridges, when he went directly home for his gun and left his flock that was waiting for him in the church in the lurch."

In the dispensation granting him the right to hold Stillington as well as Sutton, Sterne was styled "Chaplain to the Right Honourable, Charles, Earl of Aboyn," that is, to Charles Gordon, fourth Earl of Aboyne, then a young man only sixteen or seventeen years old. When or under what circumstances Sterne first became connected with this ancient Scottish family there is, of course, no indication in the document itself.* But Sterne had ample opportunity for meeting the Gordons, for they frequently, if not regularly, attended the York races in August. Sir Sidney Lee thinks that he may have made the grand tour soon after his marriage in company with the young earl or with some near relation of his.

The conjecture receives considerable support from *Tristram Shandy*. Before beginning that book, Sterne had probably travelled abroad. "Why are there so few palaces and gentlemen's seats," the elder Shandy is made to ask, "throughout so many delicious provinces in *France*? Whence is it that the few remaining *Chateaus* amongst them are so dismantled,—so unfurnished, and in so ruinous and desolate a condition?" In

* In the *Champion* (April 12, 1740) Fielding remarks that chaplains to great men are entitled by statute to hold pluralities. This accounts for Sterne's seeking a chaplaincy in order to qualify for the living at Stillington.

another passage of the first book, Sterne speaks of the muleteer who “drives on his mule,—straight forward;—for instance, from *Rome* all the way to *Loretto*, without ever once turning his head aside either to the right hand or to the left.” With the Low Countries Sterne showed perhaps greater familiarity. Uncle Toby, in giving orders for his fortifications on the bowling green, insisted on having the town “built exactly in the style of those of which it was most likely to be the representative:—with grated windows, and the gable ends of the houses, facing the streets, &c. &c.—as those in *Ghent* and *Bruges*, and the rest of the towns in *Brabant* and *Flanders*.” It was in Flanders, too, where Yorick got an asthma in skating against the wind. And finally Yorick says, in excuse for not looking into *Saxo Grammaticus* for his descent from Hamlet’s jester, “I had just time, in my travels through *Denmark* with Mr. Noddy’s eldest son, whom, in the year 1741, I accompanied as governor, riding along with him at a prodigious rate, thro’ most parts of *Europe*, and of which original journey performed by us two, a most delectable narrative will be given in the progress of this work; I had just time, I say, and that was all, to prove the truth of an observation, made by a long sojourner in that country;—namely, ‘That nature was neither very lavish, nor was she very stingy in her gifts of genius and capacity to its inhabitants.’” From all this it may be surmised at least that after the races of 1741, Sterne left his bride at home and took a flying trip to the Continent with a stripling from the house of Gordon, disguised as “Mr. Noddy’s eldest son.”*

At most, Sterne’s absence abroad was not long enough to interfere materially with his plans for improving Sutton and making it his home. He was back by January. It is interesting to see cropping up, in his mode of life at this time, the ideals of the old squirearchy to which he belonged. Under different

* The *Aberdeen Journal*, for January 6, 1795, said of the Earl of Aboyne at the time of his death: “His lordship received from nature a sound understanding, which was cultivated and improved by a liberal education. Having finished the usual course of study in the Scottish Universities, he went abroad, where mingling for several years with the higher ranks of life, his manners acquired a delicacy and gentleness which endeared him to all.”—See *Notes and Queries*, eleventh series, VIII, 116.

circumstances Sterne would have developed into another Simon or Richard of Halifax. The year of his marriage he was appointed a justice of the peace, and from enclosing and planting the garths about the rectory he branched out into miscellaneous farming for the increase of his winnings. Like most country parsons of his day, he looked after the collection and disposal of his tithes in kind, consisting of the corn and small tithes of Sutton and the hay of Huby, which belonged to his vicarage. He also cultivated the glebe of his benefice; and, not satisfied with this, he purchased a neighboring farm, described in legal phrase as “a messuage and certain lands.” In this undertaking Mrs. Sterne joined with the zest of her husband. “They kept,” said the local antiquary, who knew Sterne personally, “a dairy farm at Sutton, had seven milch cows, but they allways sold their butter cheaper than their neighbours, as they had not the least idea of œconomy, [so] that they were allways behind and in arrears with fortune.” They also raised geese (which were regarded as Mrs. Sterne’s perquisites) for the market and for presents to their friends.

Of Mrs. Sterne’s “gooses,” as he sometimes called them, that were permitted to run wild, Sterne occasionally wrote in pleasant humor. “My wife,” runs a letter to a friend at York, “sends you and Mrs. Ash a couple of stubble geese—one for each; she would have sent you a couple, but thinks ’tis better to keep your other Goose in our Bean Stubble till another week. All we can say in their behalf is, that they are (if not very fat) at least in good health and in perfect *freedome*, for they have never been confined a moment.” Just as Sterne here took his stubble geese as a theme for freedom, so in *Tristram Shandy* his experience in planting cabbages was turned to a defence of his digressive style. “I defy,” it is said there, “the best cabbage planter that ever existed, whether he plants backwards or forwards, it makes little difference in the account (except that he will have more to answer for in the one case than in the other)—I defy him to go on coolly, critically, and canonically, planting his cabbages one by one, in straight lines, and stoical distances . . . without ever and anon straddling out, or sidling into some bastardly digression.” As time went on, Sterne became occupied far more than he wished with his

farming, as may be seen in the following extract from a letter to his York friend:

"I would have wrote on Saturday, but in Truth, tho' I had both Time and Inclination, my Servants had neither the one nor the other, to go a yard out of their Road to deliver it—They having set out with a Wagon Load of Barly at 12 o'clock, and had scarce day to see it measured to the Maltzman. I have four Thrashers every Day at work, and they mortify me with declarations, That there is so much Barly they cannot get thro' that species before Xmas Day, and God knows I have (I hope) near eighty Quarters of Oats besides. How shall I manage matters to get to you, as we wish for three months!"

Sterne's dealings in land which made possible farming on so large a scale, may be uncovered in the office of the registry of deeds at Northallerton, where are kept the records for the North Riding. Conveyances to and from Sterne as there recorded, were mostly, after the custom of the time, in the form of lease and release. Unfortunately the original deeds were not engrossed in full, but only brief abstracts of them called memorials, which give merely such details as were necessary to identify the property in the conveyance. In no case is there, for example, an estimate of acreage; and whether a conveyance in a given case means an actual sale or a mortgage can only be conjectured, for there is never a statement to either effect. Besides all this, the record is evidently incomplete, as should be expected, for the conveyance by lease and release was originally a device to escape the expense and publicity of registration. Still, a shrewd guess, helped out by *Tristram Shandy* and a letter or two, leaves no doubt concerning Sterne's actual purchases. The dairy farm to which reference has been made, had formerly been in the tenure and occupation of one Richard Tindall, and consisted of a dwelling, other buildings, and various lands and closes. It was conveyed to Sterne by William Dawson and his wife Mary, of Farlington, a neighboring village and parish, by lease and release, dated respectively the first and second days of November, 1744, the year after the planting of the rectory garden with apples, pears, and plums. There is in the memorial no indication of its situation beyond the vague formula that it lay in "the Town, Townfields, precincts, and Territorys of Sutton

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in the Forrest." But the farm was situated, as is evident from what will be said much later in the memoir, to the north of the road leading through the hamlet, and it may have actually adjoined the glebe of the parish.

The week following his purchase of the Tindall estate, Sterne bought three pieces of land from Richard Harland, Esq., the chief proprietor in the neighborhood. They are described in the indenture bearing date November 10, 1744, as "one Stockiland lying in Murton Common field, . . . one land called a Hespole and Clockil Ings at the end of it, and another land called a Sankle Butt," all within the township of Sutton. The character of these lands and the uses to which they were to be put are sufficiently indicated by the local names attached to them. Murton was one of the six common fields of Sutton, which covered altogether thirteen hundred acres. The "stockiland" within it Sterne evidently desired as additional pasturage for those seven kine we wot of. What the word Hespole comes from I am not quite certain; but the alternative Clockil Ings is of course a corruption of Clockholm Ings, meaning a low-lying, marshy meadow, covered with flowered rushes, known locally as clocks or clockseaves. Sankle Butt, short for Sancome or Sankholm Butt, was likewise "a flat, spongy piece of ground," abutting upon some boundary. It is a safe inference that Sterne was about to coöperate with his neighbors in reclaiming the waste land of his parish, as well as to compete with them in huge crops of oats and barley.

The Tindall farm, supplemented by these meadows and pastures, comprised all the real estate that Sterne purchased at Sutton, though land was to come to him in another way to be related hereafter. In carrying through the purchases, Mrs. Sterne's available fortune was strained to the utmost, and additional money was required, it would seem, for stocking the farm, for ditching, and for general improvements. At any rate, Sterne conveyed on the fifth and sixth of the following December the Tindall farm and perhaps the supplementary fields and meadows to William Shaw, a merchant of the city of York. This conveyance was clearly by way of mortgage. The high hopes with which Sterne, having once purchased the land, set out on his career as farmer, is reflected in *Tristram Shandy*—in the account of the elder Shandy's "paring and

burning, and fencing in the Ox-moor," "a fine, large, whinny, undrained, unimproved common." "It was plain," as Mr. Shandy worked out the account, "he should reap a hundred lasts of rape, at twenty pounds a last, the very first year—besides an excellent crop of wheat the year following—and the year after that, to speak within bounds, a hundred—but in all likelihood, a hundred and fifty—if not two hundred quarters of pease and beans—besides potatoes without end." How Sterne's hopes were dashed to the ground and how he cursed himself for his folly must be kept for a later period.

Leaving his farming out of the account, Sterne drew himself, as Vicar of Sutton, in the character of Parson Yorick. Not only is this the tradition, but John Hall-Stevenson, who knew Sterne best of all men, looked upon the portrait as essentially true, quoting from it himself, as the newspapers had often done, the year after his friend's death. Yorick's parish,—"a small circle described upon the circle of the great world, of four *English* miles diameter, or thereabouts"—was Sutton laid by the side of Stillington. The "large grange-house," where "the good old body of a midwife" found hearty welcome, was the residence of the Harlands opposite the rectory. It was the parson's wife who established the notable woman in her profession, urging Yorick to procure the necessary license and recommending her to friends and acquaintances. Twice the midwife was summoned to the rectory. A daughter, named Lydia from Mrs. Sterne's mother and sister, was born and baptized on October 1, 1745, and was buried on the next day. Her place was taken by another Lydia, who was born and baptized on December 1, 1747. These records of the parish book, which touched Sterne so nearly, stand out prominently in his own hand, separated from the usual entries by the clerk and church wardens. Perhaps we should not take literally the account Sterne gives of the thin and lean Yorick riding about his parish and among the neighboring gentry on a broken winded pad as thin and lean as himself, drawing up, as he jogged along, "an argument in his sermon;—or a hole in his breeches." "He never could enter a village," says Sterne, "but he caught the attention of both old and young.—Labour stood still as he pass'd—the bucket hung suspended in the middle of the well—the spinning-wheel forgot its round,—even chuck-

farthing and shuffle-cap themselves stood gaping till he had got out of sight; and as his movement was not of the quickest, he had generally time enough upon his hands to make his observations,—to hear the groans of the serious,—and the laughter of the light-hearted;—all of which he bore with excellent tranquillity.”

This sketch, which furnished the subject for one of Stothard’s graceful designs, is rather too elaborate and too much in the style of Cervantes for exact truth, to say nothing of its being an apparent imitation of a passage in Shakespeare’s *King John*. Still, tradition points in the Vicar of Sutton to a man who, especially when older, cared little for decorum. “So slovenly was his dress and strange his gait,” antiquary handed down to antiquary, “that the little boys used to flock around him and walk by his side.”

Sterne and Yorick were certainly one in temperament. Both were compounded of whims and humors; both were light-hearted and outspoken. When Sterne described Yorick at the age of twenty-six, he described himself also at the time when he entered upon the living at Sutton. Of Yorick, it is said:

“His character was,—he loved a jest in his heart. . . . he was as mercurial and sublimated a composition,—as heteroclite a creature in all his declensions;—with as much life and whim, and *gaité de cœur* about him, as the kindest climate could have engendered and put together. With all this sail, poor *Yorick* carried not one ounce of ballast; he was utterly unpractised in the world; and, at the age of twenty-six, knew just about as well how to steer his course in it, as a romping, unsuspicious girl of thirteen: So that upon his first setting out, the brisk gale of his spirits, as you will imagine, ran him foul ten times in a day of somebody’s tackling; and as the grave and more slow-paced were oftenest in his way,—you may likewise imagine, ’twas with such he had generally the ill luck to get the most entangled. For aught I know there might be some mixture of unlucky wit at the bottom of such *Fracas*:—For, to speak the truth, *Yorick* had an invincible dislike and opposition in his nature to gravity;—not to gravity as such;—for where gravity was wanted, he would be the most grave or serious of mortal men for days and weeks together;—but he was an enemy to the affectation of it, and declared open war

against it, only as it appeared a cloak for ignorance, or for folly; and then, whenever it fell in his way, however sheltered and protected, he seldom gave it much quarter.

"In plain truth, he . . . was altogether as indiscreet and foolish on every other subject of discourse where policy is wont to impress restraint. *Yorick* had no impression but one, and that was what arose from the nature of the deed spoken of; which impression he would usually translate into plain *English* without any periphrasis,—and too oft without much distinction of either person, time, or place;—so that when mention was made of a pitiful or an ungenerous proceeding,—he never gave himself a moment's time to reflect who was the hero of the piece,—what his station,—or how far he had power to hurt him hereafter;—but if it was a dirty action,—without more ado,—The man was a dirty fellow,—and so on:—And as his comments had usually the ill fate to be terminated either in a *bon mot*, or to be enliven'd throughout with some drollery or humour of expression, it gave wings to *Yorick's* indiscretion. In a word, tho' he never sought, yet, at the same time, as he seldom shunn'd occasions of saying what came uppermost, and without much ceremony;—he had but too many temptations in life, of scattering his wit and his humour,—his gibes and his jests about him.—They were not lost for want of gathering."

Yorick's good counsellor Eugenius—that is, John Hall-Stevenson—was wont to warn him against his indiscretions in words like these:

"Trust me, dear *Yorick*, this unwary pleasantry of thine will sooner or later bring thee into scrapes and difficulties, which no after-wit can extricate thee out of.—In these sallies, too oft, I see, it happens, that a person laugh'd at, considers himself in the light of a person injured, with all the rights of such a situation belonging to him; and when thou viewest him in that light too, and reckons up his friends, his family, his kindred and allies,—and musters up with them the many recruits which will list under him from a sense of common danger;—'tis no extravagant arithmetic to say, that for every ten jokes,—thou hast got an hundred enemies; and till thou has gone on, and raised a swarm of wasps about thine ears, and

art half stung to death by them, thou wilt never be convinced it is so."

The only answer that Yorick would make to his friend's serious advice was "a pshaw!—and if the subject was started in the fields,—with a hop, skip, and a jump at the end of it; but if close pent up in the social chimney-corner, where the culprit was barricado'd in, with a table and a couple of arm-chairs, and could not so readily fly off in a tangent,—*Eugenius* would then go on with his lecture upon discretion." Yorick thought no ill could come of "mere jocundity of humour," of honest sallies in which there was no "spur from spleen or malevolence." But in this he was mistaken. As with Yorick so it was with Sterne in a less degree. Prudence, caution, discretion, the virtues that smooth one's way through life, were ever classed by him among the evil propensities of human nature; inasmuch as they check the spontaneous act and make one appear other than he really is. "I generally act," said Sterne, "upon first impulses," or "according as the fly stings." Delightful as he always was among friends who understood him, his jests and gibes were a source of annoyance to many people who were hard hit by them.

The clash came early with Philip Harland, his neighbor across the way, of whom Sterne wrote laconically just before his death: "As to the Squire of the parish, I cannot say we were upon a very friendly footing." The Harlands had emerged from the yeomanry in the seventeenth century. Of Richard Harland, Esq., who died in 1689, at the age of ninety-seven, a mural tablet in the parish church says: "He was a truly brave and honest man. He first engaged himself in that Troop of Noblemen and Gentlemen, associated to guard their Sovereign's Person at York, and had the Honour to serve as Lieutenant to that Body. The Civil Wars increasing, he adhered to the Royal Cause, in many Battles and Skirmishes, particularly with that fatal one of Marston Moor, he greatly distinguished himself; during the Usurpation, he with many other of the Unfortunate, suffered Fines and Imprisonment, untill the year 1660, when Monarchy, Religion, and Liberty were restored together." His grandson Richard, who had inherited the estate at Sutton and added largely to it, was among the most respected justices of the peace in the North Riding. It was of

him that Sterne purchased several parcels of land already described. By the time Sterne came to Sutton, Richard Harland had settled at York as a counsellor at law, leaving the active management of his estate to his eldest son Philip, to whom it subsequently passed by will.*

Besides being in possession of the Grange, and another farm called Greenthwaite, and frontsteads and enclosures at Sutton, Philip Harland also held, under the Archbishop of York, a lease of the rectory and the greater tithes of the parish. Enough is known of him to warrant the statement that there was little or nothing in common between the squire and his vicar. First of all, they differed politically. Harland was a Tory who contributed liberally to the county hospital at York,† founded by Dr. John Burton, a violent leader of his party. Sterne was a Whig who never subscribed a shilling to the foundation, but ridiculed, as we shall see, the Tory physician and all that he stood for. The one was a man of practical affairs, dull and grave, while the other was a jester. The rubs and vexations that necessarily accompanied them in the business of the parish, are darkly hinted at in *Tristram Shandy* along with railery of the squire's showy activities. "A hundred-and-fifty odd projects,"—says Sterne of Mr. Walter Shandy, while doubtless thinking of Philip Harland—"A hundred-and-fifty odd projects took possession of his brains by turns—he would do this, and that, and t'other—He would go to *Rome*—he would go to law—he would buy stock—he would buy *John Hobson's* farm—he would new forefront his house, and add a new wing to make it even—There was a fine water-mill on this side, and he would build a windmill on the other side of the river in full view to answer it—But above all things in the world, he would inclose the great *OX-moor*." In heedless talk like this Sterne was also ridiculing himself, but the stolid country squire would not understand that. Among other infirmities, the squire was accustomed to boast of his ancestry. It was he who erected in the parish church the monument to his great-

* The will was signed July 31, 1747, and proved in the Prerogative Court at York, July 3, 1751. The *York Courant* (May 15) contained a glowing obituary notice.

† *York Courant*, September 5, 1749.

grandfather, Richard Harland. Sterne, we may be sure, heard the high-sounding phrases of the inscription many times before they were engraved in marble, and had them in memory when he set up an altercation between Walter Shandy and my uncle Toby over the jack-boots that Sir Roger, their great-grandfather, wore at Marston Moor.

Sterne's other parishioners, who lived in "the odd houses and farms" about him, naturally took sides with the parson or the squire. Perhaps they had some real grievance against Sterne, inasmuch as the products of his dairy were sold below the market price, then an offence for which one was liable to fine and jail. There was a large car, or pond, over on Stillington Common, where, it is said, Sterne used to go for his skating, when the fly stung him that way. On one occasion "the ice broke in with him in the middle of the pond, and none of the parishioners wou'd assist to extricate him, as they were at variance." Similar to this is the story which tells how Sterne narrowly escaped an attack from his parishioners: "Another time a flock of geese assembled in the church yard at Sutton, when his wife bawl'd out 'Laurie, powl 'em,' i.e. pluck the quills, on which they were ready to riot and mob Laurie."

It would be a mistake to infer from these stories and whatever else has been said, that Sterne lived in perpetual quarrel with the squire of Sutton and his other parishioners. He lacked tact and "good management" in dealing with them; and they—steady-going farmers, moving along in the paths of ancient habit and custom—could not understand the variable temper of their parson. The result was friction which sometimes grated aloud. At times their common affairs surely went on smoothly. Many of the trees that adorned Sterne's orchard came, says the parish registry, from the park of Philip Harland. The vicar and the squire on one occasion laid aside all differences and joined hands in enclosing the common fields and meadows of the parish. The anecdapist speaks of pleasant gatherings at the rectory and at neighboring houses, where Sterne performed on the bass-viol for his friends; and his wife, who "had a fine voice and a good taste in music," sometimes contributed to the entertainment by accompanying her husband on his favorite instrument.

The vicar and his wife loved best to visit with the Crofts at Stillington Hall, whose friendship more than made up for the antipathies that existed between them and the Harlands. The Crofts, said Sterne in recollection of those days, "shewed us every kindness—'twas most truly agreeable to be within a mile and a half of an amiable family, who were ever cordial friends." The Crofts were an old Yorkshire family of merchants and aldermen that had been associated with Sterne's own kin for more than a century. One of Sterne's ancestors, Roger Jaques, Lord Mayor of York, was knighted, it will be remembered, by Charles the First in 1639. Two years later the king was again at York, where he was entertained by the new Lord Mayor, Christopher Croft, whom he also knighted before leaving the city. From this Sir Christopher, the founder of the family, was descended Sterne's friend, Stephen Croft. Born on December 8, 1712, less than a year before Sterne, Stephen Croft, as a young man, went out to Oporto, where he was engaged with others of his family in the wine-trade. (Croft's Port, now after two centuries, is still one of the best varieties of the wine.) On the death of his father in 1733, Stephen inherited the lordship of Stillington and a large estate —various lands and messuages—in the parish. He still kept up, after Sterne settled at Sutton, his connection with the factory at Oporto, but he then resided for the most part on his manor. His "amiable" wife, named Henrietta, was a daughter of Henry Thompson of Kirby Hall, Little Ouseburn, a few miles across the country on the way to Knaresborough.

There was also a younger brother, John Croft, who "grew up" at Stillington, and afterwards went to Portugal to make his fortune. He remembered Sterne well; and after coming back to York and turning antiquary, he wrote of him the anecdotes from which we have quoted liberally. Sterne was, he said, "a constant guest at my brother's table." The two men, Stephen Croft and Laurence Sterne, of the same age and of similar family connections, grew to be most congenial companions. The one brought to their common friendship jests innumerable; the other, the tales and adventures that come to a man of the world. Beyond this, Sterne took the Crofts into his confidence, telling them what books he read and studied

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most in forming his style; and there by the fireside of Stillington Hall, he read the first chapters of *Tristram Shandy* while it was in manuscript. But for Stephen Croft the sheets would have gone into the fire instead of to the printer.

C H A P. III.

Politics and Honors. 1741-1750

THE country parson was also a prebendary of York, who took an active part in the politics and intrigues within and without the Cathedral Close, at a time when the entire nation was stirred by civil and religious commotions. And yet, notwithstanding his activity, this is the obscurest phase of Sterne's life after he reached man's estate. We know that he found time, in the midst of farming and parish business, to enter the thick of Yorkshire politics, but for following him in his courses there are very few clues, direct and trustworthy. General inference from his character and the position he occupied in the Church of York must be at times our main guide. If our narrative, in consequence of this, now diverges in places from Sterne himself, it will at least bring into view the men with whom he touched elbow as friend and enemy; it will explain, too, some of his opinions and prejudices, and furnish the background to the inevitable breach with his uncle and mother.

On first coming to York, Sterne allied himself with the men whose voices were most potent in the diocese and chapter. The see was then occupied by Lancelot Blackburne, an old man above eighty years of age, "the jolly old Archbishop of York"—Horace Walpole called him—"who had all the manners of a man of quality." Like Sterne, the aged prelate was a wit and humorist whose career in the Church had been accompanied by ballads and anecdotes charging him with gay immoralities. It was he who collated Sterne to the vicarage of Sutton. The Dean of the Chapter was Richard Osbaldeston, then about fifty years old, a Cambridge man and sometime chaplain to George the Second. It was he who issued the mandate for Sterne's induction to Stillington. To him Sterne dedicated his first printed sermon "in testimony of the great respect which I owe to your character in general; and from a sense of what is due to it in particular from every member of the Church of York." But the man behind the throne, to

whom Sterne really owed his first appointments, was of course his “rich and opulent uncle,” Dr. Jaques Sterne, Precentor to the Cathedral and Archdeacon of Cleveland, to slip over his several other titles. The old archbishop dying in 1743, he was succeeded by Thomas Herring, a handsome and dignified ecclesiastic in the very prime of life. A graduate of Jesus College, the year before Dr. Sterne, he subsequently gained reputation as an eloquent preacher at Lincoln’s Inn Chapel, especially for sermons on the corrupt state of contemporary manners and a denunciation of the *Beggar’s Opera*, a kind of writing unknown to “the venerable sages of antiquity”! It was reserved for the moderns, said the preacher, to discover in “a gang of highwaymen and pickpockets a proper subject for laughter and merriment.”* Afterwards Dean of Rochester and Bishop of Bangor, he proved an able administrator, and was duly elevated, as aforesaid, to the see of York.

The new archbishop and Dr. Sterne were much alike in temper and opinion; and both were men of tremendous energy. From the first they joined hands in support of Whig policies through thick and thin and against all Roman Catholics, real or imaginary. The year 1745, when Charles Edward Stuart returned to claim his own, was a strenuous period for them. On July 24, the young Pretender landed with a few friends in the Hebrides, and on August 19, unfurled his banner at Glenfinnan. After collecting a small army of Highlanders, he marched to Perth, where he rested for reinforcements and to discipline his troops. He then proceeded to Edinburgh, and met the English at Preston Pans on September 21, rushing upon them with a yell through the mists of morning and cutting them utterly to pieces. He subsequently crossed the English border, forced the capitulation of Carlisle, marched south through Penrith, Kendal, and Lancaster into Derbyshire, where he was checked and turned backwards into Scotland. The last scene of all was the terrible carnage of the Duke of Cumberland at Culloden on April 16, 1746, whence the prince fled, a fugitive among the mountains and islands to

* See appendix to *Letters from Dr. Thomas Herring to William Duncome* (London, 1777), containing two letters to the *Whitehall Evening Post* on the *Beggar’s Opera*, dated March 30 and April 20, 1728.

the west. At York, as at other towns in the north, the events of '45 threw the people into consternation. For a time shops were closed and all business was suspended.

Archbishop Herring sounded the alarm to the nation in a sermon preached in the cathedral on September 22, the day after the defeat at Preston Pans. This sermon was preparatory to a plan that the archbishop had been maturing for some weeks for uniting the people of Yorkshire into an association for "the security of his Majesty's Person and government and for the defence of the county of York." On September 24, the nobility, clergy, and gentry met at the ancient castle of York, where the archbishop presented the articles of association in an eloquent speech,* giving "the reasons of our present assembling." The commotions in Scotland, it was believed, were but a part of a general design concerted for the ruin of England by France and Spain, "our savage and bloodthirsty enemies." The clergy of the diocese were especially commanded "to instruct and animate" their congregations "to stand up against Popery and Arbitrary Power under a French and Spanish government." By the archbishop's exertions a defence fund was collected amounting to £31,364, to which Jaques Sterne contributed £50. "Laurence Sterne, clerk," it is recorded, "subscribed and paid £10. 10s." and collected from his two parishes £15. 14s. 6d.†

Next to the archbishop, the church politician most active at York in 1745 and immediately thereafter was Dr. Jaques Sterne. When the Duke of Cumberland returned from the victory of Culloden, stopping on his way south at York, where he was granted the freedom of the city, he stayed, at his own request, with the precentor in the Minster Yard instead of with Archbishop Herring or the Lord Mayor. This compliment to Dr. Sterne is significant of the value that the government attached to his services. His sermons and addresses at the time, to say the truth, rather surpassed the archbishop's in fire

* *A Speech made by his Grace, the Lord Archbishop of York, at Presenting an Association enter'd into at the Castle of York (London, 1745).*

† *An Exact List of the Voluntary Subscribers, with the sums each subscrib'd and paid for the Security of his Majesty's Person and Government (York, 1747).*

and savage denunciation of the Pretender, Jacobites, and Roman Catholics. Especially notable is the charge that Dr. Sterne delivered to his clergy at Thirsk, a few miles from Sutton, and in other parishes of his archdeaconry, during his visitations of 1746. It was printed at York the next year under the title of *The Danger arising to our Civil and Religious Liberty from the Great Increase of Papists, and the Setting up Public Schools and Seminaries for the Teaching and Educating of Youth in the pernicious Tenets and Principles of Popery*. In this pamphlet, which was dedicated to the archbishop as the author of "that glorious Association . . . against the united Force of Popery and Rebellion," the archdeacon sought to revive the old laws of the time of Elizabeth and William the Third against saying or hearing Mass, proselyting, and Roman Catholic schools. After a brief account of the abominations of Popery, it was carefully and minutely explained to the clergy how they and the church wardens might bring all recusants in their parishes to the bar of justice for fine and imprisonment.

As if in further explanation of how it should be done, Dr. Sterne himself proceeded against the so-called "Popish Nunnery" at York. Many of the oldest and wealthiest families of Yorkshire were still Roman Catholics, and some of them had given either open or secret support to the House of Stuart, both in 1715 and in 1745. Several of these county families were accustomed to live on their estates in the country during the summer, and to come into York for the winter, living in large and fine houses with lavish hospitality in Micklegate, the muckle or great street of the city. In a narrow street branching off from Micklegate Bar, they established, in 1686, a boarding-school for their daughters, and placed in charge of it a Mrs. Paston. The little street outside Micklegate Bar soon got the name of Nunnery Lane, and the old brick house where the school was kept became known as the Nunnery. Over this institution the Church of York was at times very uneasy. In 1714, Mrs. Paston, like other Roman Catholics in Micklegate ward, refused to take the oath of allegiance to George the First, and in consequence her school was closely watched for some time. But everything became quiet in the course of a few years until the disturbances of 1745 and thereafter. Then Dr. Sterne made up his mind to put an end to this "Popish Semi-

nary, set up for poisoning the minds of the King's Subjects." Two old women then in charge of the school, one of whom was styled "the Abbess," were summoned before an ecclesiastic court and convicted of recusancy. They were admonished and fined twelve pence a Sunday.* Not satisfied with this mild punishment, Dr. Sterne proceeded against them under the laws against saying or hearing Mass and against a Papist's engaging in the education or boarding of youth. The cause dragged on in the courts until 1751, when it was dropped. Throughout it all the "pious Doctor" was bantered a good deal on his "rough methods of making converts of the ladies" and on "his stale ecclesiastical tricks." What he imagined, in the blindness of his zeal, as a nunnery, was a quite harmless boarding-school which flourished long afterwards without molestation.

Dr. Sterne's aide-de-camp, so to speak, during this period was his nephew, Laurence Sterne. But of what the young man did in the humble capacity, there are, as has been said, no contemporary records. His deeds redounded to the credit or discredit of his uncle. This part of his life can not be uncovered in satisfactory detail. And yet a hint or indication, a tradition, and a chance phrase dropped by Sterne among friends in later life, are sufficient for a true relation so far as it goes. Laurence Sterne was no doubt initiated into York politics during the midsummer of 1741, when occurred the general election that resulted in the retirement of Sir Robert Walpole. At York the contest between Whig and Tory was waged with a bitterness unknown for many years. In the poll-books published afterwards, each party accused the other of underhand and disgraceful methods of securing votes, hinting, though not openly charging, bribery. Against the Tories, a large and influential body containing a majority of the country gentlemen, were marshalled the clergy in compact and solid ranks, under the leadership of Dr. Sterne and other ecclesiastics of high place. Notwithstanding the most strenuous effort, the Whigs barely succeeded in electing one of their candidates to the new Parliament, though he had represented York for twenty years and had just been appointed one of the lords of the admiralty.

* *York Courant*, October 3, 1749; and *St. James's Evening Post*, October 5-7.

Their second candidate was left far behind in the polling by the two Tories. What that fierce contest meant for the minor clergy and the understrappers may be inferred from a brief record to which reference has been already made. The Rev. Robert Hitch, Canon and Prebendary of North Newbald, "a fine tall personage," said Thomas Gent, a York printer and bookseller, "overheated himself about obtaining votes for Parliament, that threw him into a mortal fever, which . . . conveyed his precious soul, I hope, into the regions of a blessed immortality."* That Laurence Sterne, then Prebendary of Givendale, likewise performed services deemed worthy of reward, seems quite clear, though there is no mention of them; for within ten days after the death of Mr. Hitch, he was appointed to the comfortable prebend so opportunely left vacant.

Though Sterne likely engaged in the open solicitation of votes as well as his predecessor who lost his life thereby, his main services to his church and party at this time and in succeeding years were performed by his facile pen. To this effect we have direct, if vague, statements. "In his younger years," so runs a letter of John Croft respecting Sterne, "he was a good deal employed by his uncle in writing political papers and pamphlets in favour of Sir Robert Walpole's Administration." "We have heard," said the *Monthly Review* for October, 1775, "of his writing a periodical electioneering paper at York in defence of the Whig interest." *St. James's Chronicle*, in its issue of April 10, 1788, had a longer version of the same story, which, the correspondent claimed, Sterne once told to a friend. "He wrote," it is said there, "a weekly paper in support of the Whigs during the long canvass for the great contested election, . . . and he owed his preferment to that paper —so acceptable was it to the then Archbishop." The essential truth of these traditions is confirmed by Sterne himself in his brief autobiography, wherein he says "my uncle . . . quarrelled with me . . . because I would not write paragraphs in the newspapers."

The only regularly printed newspaper at York was *The York Courant*, then issued every Tuesday. Though not violently partisan in ordinary times, it was owned and conducted

* Thomas Gent, *Life*, 194-195.

by a Tory, Cæsar Ward, the printer and bookseller in Coney Street, who practically closed the columns of his newspaper to the Whigs during excited canvasses and the Jacobite insurrection, turning it into a Tory organ. Only by browbeating was Dr. Sterne then able to get his paragraphs inserted into the *Courant*. Under these circumstances it was necessary for him and his party to print and issue pamphlets and temporary sheets. To this work the nephew of Dr. Sterne would be expected to contribute his share. Of the pamphlets that Laurence wrote at this time, none have yet been identified; and we can not place our finger upon any paragraph in the newspapers as surely his. But there is a clue to the temporary sheet in which he probably bore a hand. The Whig printer at York from 1742 to 1752 was John Gilfillan. At his press in Coffee Yard were printed the *List of the Voluntary Subscribers . . . for the Defence of the County of York* and the various archidiaconal charges of Dr. Sterne. On the title-page of the *List*, bearing date 1747, is an announcement beneath the name of John Gilfillan, that at his shop "may be had the News-paper call'd *The York Journal, or the Protestant Courant*." Two years before this—on January 22, 1744-5, according to a minute of the House of Commons—"John Gilfillan, printer of the *York Courant*, was ordered to attend for an article reflecting on Admiral Vernon, a member of the House."* In designating the journal that had offended, the clerk either made a mistake or purposely abbreviated its long title, for Gilfillan never had anything to do with the Tory *York Courant*. No copy of Gilfillan's newspaper, so far as is known, now exists; but Robert Davies, a York antiquary of the last century, met with one of Gilfillan's advertisements descriptive of his aim. The little sheet was to contain "the earliest, best, and most authentic accounts of any in the North of England; and, being entirely calculated for the service of the King and country, he hoped it would meet with encouragement from all who wished well to the present happy establishment in church and state."† With this newspaper, set up probably in 1745, by a Whig printer under the patronage of the Church of York, Laurence Sterne was un-

* Smith's *Old Yorkshire*, new series, II, 191 (1890).

† Davies, *Memoir of the York Press*, 323-324 (London, 1868).

doubtedly closely connected; not perhaps as editor, but as a leading contributor by direction of his uncle.

It may be just surmised, if nothing more, that the easy paragraph-writer was the author of various letters to London newspapers, during the Jacobite alarm, descriptive of doings at York, of arrests, trials, and executions of those unfortunate gentlemen who joined the Pretender's army. "On Saturday last," to quote a sentence here and there from the York correspondent to the *London Evening Post* for November 6-8, 1746, "On Saturday last eleven of the rebels under sentence of death . . . were brought from the Castle in three sledges.

. . . They walked up to the gallows without the least concern, where they prayed very devoutly. After which Capt. Hamilton mounted the ladder first, Frazier next, and the rest in order.

. . . One of them said he died because his K—g was not upon the T—e. . . . Captain Hamilton was the first whose heart was cut out. . . . We hear that Sir David Murray, Bart. and fifty-two more have received notice of execution for next Saturday."

In this dreadful work of hunting out the Jacobites and bringing them to the bar of justice, no one was more zealous than Dr. Sterne. He was so ready, as a magistrate of the West Riding, to issue a warrant for commitment on vague and hearsay evidence, that the Secretary of State thought it necessary on one occasion to reprimand him. Two cases of his dealings with well-known Tory physicians of York are of especial interest here. One is that of Dr. Francis Drake, the distinguished antiquary and historian, who refused the oaths in 1745. Before and after his arrest and release, he assailed "Parson St—e" in paragraph after paragraph contributed to the *York Courant*, holding up to scathing ridicule the precentor's career in religion and politics. In reply Dr. Sterne, who was not permitted to employ the local newspaper, had recourse to "virulent advertisements," which circulated among the coffee-houses and passed on from hand to hand. Whether his nephew collaborated on these satirical pamphlets, we do not presume to know; all that can be said is that he was then writing for his uncle. The second case is that of Dr. John Burton, author and antiquary, who was also suspected of Jacobitism. In Dr. Sterne's long persecution of this able physician, Lau-

rence was closely involved. His hatred and contempt for the high-flying Tory amounted to an obsession falling little short of insanity. Pilloried again and again in *Tristram Shandy*, Dr. Burton *alias* Dr. Slop is never dropped except to be pilloried a few pages on.

Three years younger than Laurence Sterne, Burton graduated, Bachelor of Medicine, at St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1733, and immediately began the practice of medicine at Heath, a Yorkshire village near Wakefield. The next year came on a contested election for the county, in which "the greatest exertions were made by the friends and opponents of Walpole." To the young physician, who espoused the Tory side with vehemence, was entrusted the entire charge of the electors of Wakefield, where "he was very active and vigilant in the discharge of his duties." "On the fourth day of the poll," it is said further, "he conducted a body of freeholders to York," saw to it that they voted, and then watched at a booth till the voting was over. The contest resulted in the return of one member on each side. Dr. Burton's candidate, Sir Miles Stapleton, headed the poll; and Mr. Cholmley Turner, whose canvass was conducted, as was said earlier, by Dr. Sterne, came in second. But for the "pernicious activity" of the physician of Wakefield, the Whigs would have easily elected both of their candidates.

The election over, Dr. Burton married a small heiress and went abroad to complete his medical education. He took the degree of M.D. at Rheims and attended the clinics of the great Boerhaave at Leyden. On his return he settled permanently at York "as physician and man-mid-wife," where he soon became very popular with the poorer classes, for he treated them free of charge, and founded, with the aid of wealthy friends, a hospital for the city and county of York, which was known among his political enemies as the Tory Infirmary. Meanwhile Dr. Burton had appeared in print. His first effort, which shows the way his studies were tending, was *An Account of a Monstrous Child*, a tract contributed to the *Edinburgh Medical Essays* for 1736. This was followed two years later by *A Treatise on the Non-naturals*, which excited the mirth of the author of *Tristram Shandy*, who enquired of

the doctor “why the most natural actions of a man’s life should be called his non-naturals.”

Political animosities, which had long been smouldering, again broke out violently in the election of 1741. Dr. Burton again became conspicuous and repeated his success of 1734; whereupon he was subjected, according to his own narrative, to all sorts of abuse and calumny from the Whigs in general and from Dr. Sterne in especial. When, for example, Dr. Burton, who was living at that time in Coney Street, applied to the Corporation for a more respectable residence in the centre of the city, his political enemies interfered and tried to prevent the lease. He however obtained the large house that he desired, and went on with his profession, giving more and more attention to obstetrics, which, as a new science, exposed him to the ridicule of a large body of men and women who were content to have their children brought into the world after the old ways practised by the midwives.

The year 1745 was now at hand and Dr. Sterne had his revenge. On November 22, news reached York that the vanguard of the Highlanders was at Kendal. The inhabitants of York were alarmed lest the rebels should enter Yorkshire and march on to the city. Dr. Burton, who owned two farms near Settle, in the West Riding, not far from the borders of Lancashire, received permission from the Lord Mayor to post west to look after his estates, which seemed to be in danger. The rebels, however, took a route to the left of his property, leaving his tenants unharmed. After this discovery, the doctor went on to the village of Hornby in the North Riding, where he was taken prisoner, while being shaved at an inn, by a party of Highlanders, who entertained him at the castle and then conveyed him south to Lancaster. After a few days’ detention, he was dismissed with a pass for his safety. On reaching York, he was met by his enemies, to whom had come rumors of his movements. He was immediately—it was November 30—brought before Thomas Place, the recorder, and Dr. Jaques Sterne, a magistrate for the West Riding, who issued a warrant for his commitment to York Castle as “a suspicious person to his Majesty’s government.” During the examination, Dr. Sterne, the unfortunate physician alleged, “made a great Blustering, and talked much, but it was *vox et praeterea nihil*;

he was often in such a hurry with party fury, that he could not utter his words for *vox faucibus haesit*, and he presently foamed at the mouth especially when I laughed at him and told him, that I set him and all his party at defiance, unless false witnesses were to appear, which I own, I was not altogether without apprehensions about.”*

Of what took place on that occasion and subsequently, Dr. Sterne published three brief accounts in the newspaper that he was then managing at York, presumably in the *York Journal and Protestant Courant*. These notices, it has been asserted, though without positive evidence, were written by his nephew. The first of them was sent up to the *London Evening Post*, where it appeared in the issue of December 5-7. This paragraph, in the form of a letter from York, dated December 3, has great interest as most likely from the pen of Laurence Sterne. It runs as follows:

“On Saturday last Dr. Burton was committed to the Castle, by the Recorder and Dr. Sterne, as Justices for the West Riding of this county. It appearing from his own Confession, that he went from Settle to Hornby, *knowing the Rebels were there*, and upon a Supposition that the Duke of Perth was there, wrote a Letter to him, which being opened by Lord Elcho, he was sent for up by two Highlanders to the Castle, and, as he says, carried along with them as a Prisoner to Lancaster, where he convers’d with Lord George Murray, and a Person there call’d his Royal Highness Prince Charles. There was the greatest Satisfaction expressed at his Commitment, from the highest to the lowest Person in the City, that has been known here upon any Occasion.”

A few days later, Burton applied for release on bail. This was refused by Dr. Sterne and three other magistrates, and a further charge was brought against Burton on the information of one John Nesbitt, a prisoner in the castle. A new warrant of detainer was issued with an order to the jailer not to admit the doctor to bail, as the new evidence amounted to a charge of high treason. Dr. Burton lost his place on the hospital board

* For the whole transaction, see Burton, *British Liberty Endangered* (London, 1749); and Robert Davies, *A Memoir of John Burton*, in the second volume of *The Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal*.

and it seemed as if he would be tried and hanged. But just before the assizes, the Secretary of State intervened with an order that the prisoner be conveyed up to London for examination before the Privy Council. He was detained for a full year—till March 25, 1747—when he was summoned to the Cockpit and discharged. While in London, Dr. Burton conversed with several gentleman who had fought on the Pretender's side at Culloden, and afterwards wrote out what he learned *Journal of the Most Miraculous Escape of the Young Chevalier* (1749). By this time, too, he had begun, under the influence of Dr. Drake, his studies in archaeology, which resulted in the *Monasticon Eboracense, or the Ecclesiastical History of Yorkshire* (1758), a monument to patient labor and research. After his release, Dr. Burton resumed his practice and professional studies at York, publishing in 1751 *An Essay toward a Complete New System of Midwifery*, and two years later *A Letter to William Smellie, M.D.*, of Glasgow, violently attacking the Scottish physician's theory and practice of midwifery. Thereafter he was known among his enemies as "Hippocrates Obstetricius."

Despite one's sympathy with the York physician in his long persecution, he was, to say the truth, very indiscreet in his conduct. Not a Jacobite and Papist surely, his extreme Toryism exposed him to a suspicion of being both, at a time when passions ran so high that little distinction could be made between a Tory and a Jacobite and none at all between a Jacobite and a Papist. It was then, to quote the doctor himself, "tantamount to downright Disaffection, to assert that the young Chevalier has not a cloven foot, or something monstrous about him." It must be said, in justice to the two Sternes, that the physician excited disgust among many others with whom he came into conflict, for he was obstinate, noisy, and meddlesome. An elaborate story got into print about a fracas that occurred at the inauguration dinner given by Henry Jubb, an apothecary, on being elected sheriff of York in the autumn of 1754. The dinner was held at the sheriff's house in Micklegate. There were present the Lord Mayor, who presided according to custom, several aldermen, and other leading citizens, including the York physician. Dr. Burton did not rise

with the rest when the Lord Mayor proposed a toast "To the glorious and immortal memory of King William the Third"; and in consequence hot words passed across the table. Mr. George Thompson, a Whig wine-merchant, by that time "warmed with the convivial glass," just slightly filliped a cork towards the doctor in way of derision; and a few minutes afterwards tried to compel him to drink "Everlasting disappointment [or "damnation" according to Dr. Burton] to the Pretender and all his adherents." Burton said that he had religious scruples against drinking damnation to anybody. "A most extraordinary scene of riot and disorder ensued." The guests jumped upon the table; the doctor brandished his cane right and left, levelling to the floor two gentlemen, one of whom "collared him, tore his shirt and scratched his neck." At length an attorney-at-law wrested the weapon from Burton and threw it into the fire. The scuffle ended with the forcible ejection of the infuriated physician.*

The name of Laurence Sterne does not appear in the list of distinguished guests who attended this "entertainment," as it was mildly called, at Mr. Sheriff Jubb's. But whether present or not, he shared in the violent hostility of his party towards Dr. Burton. We cannot say when and where Sterne and Burton first came into conflict. We can only point to the contested election of 1741 and the proceedings against the physician in 1745-46, as the probable occasions, at a time when the young prebendary was closely associated with his uncle in electioneering and paragraph-writing. Burton's books on midwifery he read, and laughed at them. No sooner was *Tristram Shandy* out than everybody at York knew that Dr. Slop and Dr. Burton were one. As if to make the identification perfectly clear, Sterne paraphrased an amusing passage in Burton's attack on Dr. William Smellie of Glasgow; wherein the Scottish physician was accused of converting the drawing of a petrified child in an old medical treatise into a full-fledged author, who of course had never existed.† Dr. Burton,

* See *An Account of What Passed between Mr. George Thompson of York and Dr. John Burton . . . at Mr. Sheriff Jubb's Entertainment* (London, 1756).

† "If any thing can be added to shock human Faith, or prejudice your Character as an Historian or Translator, it is your having con-

as he appears under the name of Dr. Slop, was the bungling man-midwife to whom Tristram Shandy owed his broken nose. In appearance the *accoucheur*, as he wished to be called, was a “little squat, uncourtly figure . . . of about four feet and a half perpendicular height, with a breadth of back, and a sesquipedality of belly, which might have done honour to a serjeant in the horse-guards.” It was his custom to ride “a little diminutive pony, of a pretty colour—but of strength—alack!—scarce able to have made an amble of it, under such a fardel.” Slung at the doctor’s back might be seen a “green bays bag,” in which jingled, as he rode along, his new-invented “instruments of salvation and deliverance.” Dr. Slop runs through *Tristram Shandy* as an ill-tempered, ill-mannered, and vulgar Papist, the butt of all the current jests and prejudices against Roman Catholics.

Sterne’s frightful caricature of an able physician and learned antiquary is unexplainable without reference to the fierce religious passions awakened by the events of 1745, when every church, from the Cathedral of St. Peter’s to the remotest parish, rang with denunciations of Rome and all her ways. Archbishop Herring set the pace for his clergy when he announced from the pulpit that “no nation . . . can possibly be happy under Popery,” for “it sinks the spirits of men and damps the vigour of life,” and then went on to ascribe the dreadful state of society to contamination with “a Popish abjured Pretender.” “Things every Day,” declared the preacher, waxing eloquent in his rhetoric, “proceed from bad to worse: magistracy is contemned, dignity and order sunk to the common level, adultery and vagrant uncleanness is become an epidemicall evil.”* This cry was taken up by the archdeacons and carried to the country parsons.

Sterne, like the rest, heeded the call. He was at York Castle, we may count upon it, when the clergy and gentry entered inverted *Lithopædii Senonensis Icon*, (which you call *Lithopedus Senonensis*) an inanimate, petrified Substance, into an Author, after you had been *six years cooking up your Book*.”—*Letter to Smellie*, p. 1 (London, 1753). Compare *Tristram Shandy*, footnote to ch. XIX, bk. II.

* *A Sermon Preached at Kensington on Wednesday, the Seventh of January (London, 1747).*

into the association for the defence of Yorkshire, and at Thirsk when his uncle laid bare the abuses and horrors of the Church of Rome. His own sermons, such as without doubt belong to this period, might have been written, so far as their tone is concerned, either by the archbishop or by the arch-deacon. The point of difference is but one of style. Neither of the men in higher place defined Popery, with reference to penances and indulgences, quite so neatly as Sterne when he called it "a pecuniary system, well contrived to operate upon men's passions and weakness, whilst their pockets are o'picking." He preached eloquently against the Mass and its mummeries, auricular confession, the arts of the Jesuits, and "the cruelties, murders, rapine, and bloodshed" that have ever accompanied Rome in her history. The long wars of his time, the high tax rate in consequence of them, and the pestilence that swept over the cattle after the insurrection of 1745, leaving "no herd in the stalls," he regarded as the last judgment of the Almighty upon a people who had forgotten the ways of righteousness, and were listening to the seductions of Jesuit missionaries.

It was a red-letter day in the life of the young prebendary when he rose into the pulpit of St. Peter's before a large and distinguished congregation, and drew for them the portrait of a victim of the Inquisition. "Behold," spoke the preacher as if out of a romance, "Behold *religion* with mercy and justice chain'd down under her feet,—there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and instruments of torment.—Hark!—What a piteous groan!—See the melancholy wretch who utter'd it, just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent. Behold this helpless victim delivered up to the tormentors. His body so wasted with sorrow and long confinement, you'll see every nerve and muscle as it suffers.—Observe the last movement of that horrid engine.—What convulsions it has thrown him into. Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretch'd.—What exquisite torture he endures by it.—'Tis all nature can bear.—Good God! see how it keeps his weary soul hanging on his trembling lips, willing to take its leave,—

but not suffered to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell,—dragg'd out of it again to meet the flames,—and the insults in his last agonies.”*

Sterne's intense hatred of the Church of Rome, which carried him, with the rest of his party, to the verge of madness, was a phase of his early development that endured until he came to visit France and Italy and move freely among all classes in the two countries. Not till then was he aware that it was possible for Roman Catholics to be content and happy. In the meantime, his feelings against Rome naturally became less violent as his mind was drawn to other things. Immediately after the Jacobite crisis, various important changes affecting his own career took place in the Church of York. In the autumn of 1747, Archbishop Herring was translated to the see of Canterbury in recognition of “his tried loyalty and known zeal in the cause of Protestantism.” His place was filled by Matthew Hutton, formerly Bishop of Bangor. Richard Osbaldeston, Dean since 1728 of the York Chapter, was likewise elevated to the bishopric of Carlisle. His successor was John Fountayne, Prebendary of Salisbury and Canon of Windsor. Dr. Sterne was disappointed of immediate reward, for he had lost favor at home because of his persecution of Dr. Burton and the “Popish Nunnery”; and his Majesty’s ministers thought he ought to be satisfied with the various sinecures which he already enjoyed. At one time he offered £200 for the freedom of the city of York; but the Corporation, in spite of the inducement, refused him the honor. He tried for the deanery of York and for prebends at Westminster, Windsor, and Canterbury, in all of which he missed his aim. But in lieu of these places, he was transferred, in 1750, from the archdeaconry of Cleveland to that of the richer East Riding, and five years later he was appointed to the second prebendal stall in Durham Cathedral. There are extant several amusing letters† of his to the Duke of Newcastle, in which the pluralist pleads for these and other appointments, urging in his own behalf long and faithful services to church and state. The one asking for Durham is typical. It runs as follows:

* *The Abuses of Conscience*, July 29, 1750.

† British Museum, Additional MSS., 32719-32730.

“My Lord

“I hope Your Grace finds that it is not in my nature to be troublesome in my Solicitations; and indeed I am the less so, as I had the Honour of being taken in so kind a manner under Your immediate Protection. But hearing of the Bishop of Gloucester’s Death, in my Passage thro’ this Town to Bath, I am willing to hope that I shall not be thought impertinent in acquainting Your Grace that a Prebend in the Church of Durham, where there are two Vacant, as it lies near my other Preferments, will be equally agreeable to me, as either Westminster, Windsor, or Canterbury; but I submit it intirely to Your Grace’s Judgment and Pleasure, only begging Leave to hope that as I have spent now upwards of Thirty five years in a faithful Service of the Crown, at an Expence that I believe no Clergyman else has done, that I shall, thro’ Your Grace’s Friendship and Goodness, receive a Mark of the King’s Favour at this time, when there are so many Stalls vacant in different Churches:

“There will be no one with More Gratitude, as there has been none with greater zeal thro’ life,

“My Lord,

“Your Grace’s

“Most Dutiful and

“Westminster—September
the 19th 1752—

“Devoted Servant

“Jaques Sterne”

In reply Newcastle asked Dr. Sterne for a list of his present holdings with their value, as preliminary to further grants. The list, which was duly written out and sent to the duke, contains these large items:

“A Prebend of Southwell. The reserv’d Rent of which is only £17—15s.—0, but there is a Corpse belonging to it at South-Muskhamb, of about £200 a year, and an House at Southwell.

“The Vicarage of Hornsea Cum Riston, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, worth £150—

“The Rectory of Rise something above £90.

“He has nothing else but the Arch-Deaconry, where he lives, worth about £60—and a Residentialyship and Precentorship of York, which are inseparable in His Case, because

if he parted with the Precentorship, he cou'd not continue Residentiary—worth betwixt three and four hundred pounds a year communibus annis."

Dr. Sterne's income, about £900 a year, as it appears from the memorandum, was really large for the eighteenth century, though the pluralist, with his lack of humor, could not see it that way.

His nephew undoubtedly expected promotion like the rest. If his services were less conspicuous than theirs, he was certainly regarded at that time as a young clergyman of unusual ability, for he was invited to preach at York on two extraordinary occasions. At that time the city supported two charities for maintaining and educating poor children—the Blue Coat School for boys, and the Grey Coat School for girls. On Good Friday, April 17, 1747, the young prebendary delivered in the parish church of St. Michael-le-Belfrey, by the great minster, the annual sermon for the benefit of these foundations. Besides the usual congregation of commoners, there were present the Lord Mayor, aldermen, and sheriffs, in full official capacity. The preacher most aptly chose for his theme "the miracle wrought in behalf of the widow of Zarephath, who had charitably taken Elijah under her roof, and administered unto him in a time of great scarcity and distress." Already a master of his art, Sterne rose, by one picturesque passage after another, to the pathetic climax where Elijah restores the widow's dead child to life, and, taking it in his arms, places it once more in the bosom of its mother. Finally came the direct appeal to the congregation, that the unfortunate children among them might not be sent out into a "vicious world" without friends and instruction. The appeal was heeded, for the collection amounted to more than sixty-four pounds.* A few weeks later the sermon appeared in print as a sixpenny pamphlet, bearing the title *The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Consider'd*, and dedicated to "The Very Reverend Richard Osbaldeston," who had not yet received his appointment to Carlisle.

Eloquent as Sterne was on charity, he greatly surpassed that effort in the sermon preached in the cathedral at the close of

* *General Advertiser*, April 25, 1747.

the summer assizes, on July 29, 1750. The opportunity came to him as chaplain for that year to Sir William Pennyman, the high sheriff of the county of York. In the congregation were the judges for the summer session, "the Hon. Mr. Baron Clive and the Hon. Mr. Baron Smythe," the high sheriff and the gentlemen of the grand jury, the clergy of the cathedral, and commoners to the number of a thousand. For this official function the preacher selected as text a sentence from St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews: "For we trust we have a good conscience." Sterne began, as was henceforth to be his way on great occasions, by half denying the assertion of his text. In this instance was set up the claim against the Apostle that any man, if he thinks about it at all, ought to know whether he has a good conscience or not; it should be for him a matter of knowledge, not merely of trust, St. Paul to the contrary notwithstanding. After winning attention by this startling device, Sterne proceeded to draw from life admirable character-sketches of various types of men, ranging from the openly vicious to the casuist who permits conscience to be dethroned from the judgment-seat by passion, greed, self-interest, or false notions of honor. On the way he stopped for a gay thrust at his banker and physician, "neither of them men of much religion," to whom he trusted his fortune or life, simply because it was for their advantage to deal honestly with him: because, he said, "they cannot hurt me without hurting themselves more." But in case it should be to the interest of the one, added the preacher, "to secrete my fortune and turn me out naked in the world," or of the other to "send me out of it and enjoy an estate by my death without dishonour to himself or his art," then no dependence could be placed upon these men who make a jest of religion and treat its sanctions with contempt. Running all through the sermon, as an adroit compliment to the judges, were images and phrases taken from the procedure of law-courts, reaching their climax at the close, where Sterne likened conscience to "a British judge in this land of liberty, who makes no new law, but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written."

At "the unanimous request" of "many Gentlemen of Worth and Character," the sermon was sent to the local press as a sixpenny pamphlet under the title of *The Abuses of Con-*

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science. On the title-page were the names of the two honorable judges; and the dedication was inscribed to "Sir William Pennyman, Bart.," and a long list of grand jurors. So well did Sterne himself like this clever sermon—the most closely reasoned discourse that ever came from his pen—that he afterwards slipped it into *Tristram Shandy*, where Dr. Slop, *alias* Dr. Burton, who surely was not present on its first delivery, was at length compelled to listen to it from the lips of Corporal Trim.

C H A P. IV.

Quarrel with His Uncle. 1747-1751

THESE unusual honors which Sterne was receiving were accompanied by no important advancement, owing, in the first place, to dissensions in the Church of York. During the crisis of 1745, the clergy suspended their petty differences and united against a common enemy in defence of the House of Hanover and the Church of England. But no sooner was the danger over, than they began once more to intrigue against one another, each seeking his own advantage without much regard to his associates. From the first there was friction between the new archbishop and the new dean, the one accusing the other of encroaching upon his rights and prerogatives, with the result that two more or less distinct parties were formed within the York Chapter.

On the one side were Archbishop Hutton and Dr. Jaques Sterne, with their followers, men of the same age and similar political and religious opinions. Against them were Dean Fountayne and several of the more liberal canons and prebendaries, including Laurence Sterne, who was an old college friend of the dean. These antagonisms hastened what was sure to come at some time, first an estrangement and then an open and bitter quarrel between the two Sternes, uncle and nephew. Perhaps as early as 1747, there occurred a hot scene between the two divines, in the course of which Sterne told his uncle that he would write no more political paragraphs for him. This scene very likely announced the end of the newspaper established at York under the auspices of the Whigs. "I . . . detested such dirty work," said Sterne long afterwards, "thinking it beneath me." And to a friend he wrote: "I am tired of employing my brains for other people's advantage — 'Tis a foolish sacrifice I have made for some years to an ungrateful person." The same tale was told by the wiseacres who gathered at the York coffee-houses, only they added that the quarrel was really over "a favourite mistress of the Precentor's," who loved Laurie too well.

In return Dr. Sterne denounced his nephew as “ungrateful and unworthy,” and inveighed against him furiously in letters to mutual friends. The nephew, if we interpret aright a passage in *Tristram Shandy*, accused his uncle of being at the head of “a grand confederacy” against him; of playing the part, as it were, of Malice in a melodrama, who sets on “Cruelty and Cowardice, twin ruffians,” to waylay a traveller in the dark. “The whole plan of the attack,” says the passage, “was put in execution all at once,—with so little mercy on the side of the allies,—and so little suspicion in *Yorick*, of what was carrying on against him,—that when he thought, good easy man! full preferment was o’ripening,—they had smote his root, and then he fell, as many a worthy man had fallen before him.” *Yorick*’s head was so bruised and misshapen by these unhandsome blows that he declared, quoting Sancho Panza, that should he recover and “Mitre thereupon be suffered to rain down from heaven as thick as hail, not one of them would fit it.”

Though the quarrel had been long brewing, the first serious blow, however, was struck, not at Sterne’s head, but, highwayman-like, at his purse. As Prebendary of North Newbald, Laurence Sterne preached in the cathedral twice every year, on the sixth Sunday in Lent, and on the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, when the harvesting of his crops was over.* Prebendaries and other officials who from sickness, distance, or disinclination found it impossible or inconvenient to take their turns at preaching, were accustomed to engage a brother living near by. Their agent in the negotiations was sometimes John Hildyard, a York bookseller, who knew everybody and whose shop in Stonegate was a gathering place for the minor clergy. Sterne liked to supply the places of others for the addition which it brought to his income. Writing to his archdeacon in 1750, he said: “My daughter will be Twenty Pounds a better Fortune by the favours I’ve received of this kind . . . this Year; and as so much at least is annually and without much trouble to be picked up in our Pulpit, by any man who

* A table of preachers containing Sterne’s dates is given by Thomas Ellway in *Anthems . . . as they are now Perform’d in the Cathedral . . . of York . . . Durham . . . Lincoln* (York, 1753).

cares to make the Sermons, you who are a Father will easily excuse my motive."

It was no hard labor. The sermons were usually perfunctory, and Sterne could drive into York on a Sunday morning, breakfast with a friend, preach in the cathedral, and be back at Sutton or Stillington for the evening service. It meant a little physical exertion; nothing more. Dean Fountayne and various prebendaries, who were friends to Sterne, gave him their less important turns, and even his uncle down to 1750 permitted him to take his place on the twenty-ninth of May, a day of thanksgiving for the restoration of Charles the Second. All went on well until late in the autumn of 1750, when the quarrel between uncle and nephew came to a violent climax. On All Saints of that year Sterne came in and preached for the dean. It was a hollow and conventional sermon worked over from Tillotson on the text, "For our conversation is in heaven," and keyed to the tune: "Here we consider ourselves only as pilgrims and strangers.—Our home is in another country, where we are continually tending; there our hearts and affections are placed; and when the few days of our pilgrimage shall be over, there shall we return, where a quiet habitation and a perpetual rest is designed and prepared for us for ever." Just after the sermon Sterne strolled into Hildyard's shop to enquire about preaching a week or two later for Francis Blackburne, Archdeacon of Cleveland in succession to Dr. Sterne. Whereupon he discovered that his uncle was intervening against this source of his supply. There ensued a lively dialogue, which was broken off on the word *impudence* by the entrance of Dr. William Herring, the Chancellor of the diocese. Sterne related the whole story of the angry encounter in a letter to his archdeacon, dated at Sutton, November 3, 1750:

"I step'd," says Sterne, "into his [Hildyard's] shop just after Sermon on *All Saints*, when with an Air of much Gravity and Importance, he beckon'd me to follow him into an inner Room. No sooner had he shut the Dore, but with the awful Solemnity of a Premier who held a Lettre de Cachêt upon whose Contents my Life or Liberty depended—after a Minut's Pause—he thus opens his Commission: 'Sir—My Friend the A. Deacon of Cleveland, not caring to preach

his Turn, as I conjectured, has left me to provide a Preacher, —but before I can take any Steps in it with Regard to you —I want first to know, Sir, upon what Footing you and Dr. Sterne are?—‘Upon what Footing?’—‘Yes Sir, How your Quarel stands?’—‘What’s that to you—How our Quarel stands! What’s that to you, you Puppy?’ ‘But Sir, Mr. Blackburn would know’—‘What’s that to him?’—‘But Sir, don’t be angry, I only want to know of you, whether Dr. Sterne will not be displeased in Case you should preach’—‘Go Look; I’ve just now been preaching and you could not have fitter Opportunity to be satisfyed.’—‘I hope, Mr. Sterne, you are not Angry.’ ‘Yes I am; But much more astonished at your *Impudence*.’ I know not whether the Chancellor’s stepping in at this Instant and flapping to the Dore, did not save his tender Soul the Pain of the last Word. However that be, he retreats upon this unexpected Rebuff, takes the Chancellor aside, asks his Advice, comes back Submissive, begs Quarter, tells me Dr. Hering had quite satisfyed him as to the Grounds of his Scruple (tho’ not of his Folly) and therefore beseeches me to let the Matter pass, and to preach the Turn. When I —as Percy complains in Harry 4

—All smarting with my Wounds
To be thus pestered by a Popinjay
Out of my Grief and my Impatience
Answered neglectingly, I know not what
—for he made me Mad
To see him shine so bright and smell so sweet
And talk so like a waiting Gentlewoman
—Bid him be Gone—and seek Another fitter for his *Turn*.

“But as I was too angry to have the perfect Faculty of recollecting Poetry, however pat to my Case, so I was forced to tell him in plain Prose tho’ somewhat elevated——That I would not preach, and that he might get a Parson wh[erever he] could find one.”

At this point, Hildyard produced his letter from the archdeacon with reference to the supply. After reading it and finding that it contained only “a cautious hint” against offending the precentor, Sterne cooled his angry humor and decided to take the turn. Three days later, as he was on his way to the

postoffice with the letter from which we have quoted, Sterne met the bookseller, who pressed him not to let the matter transpire. Though Sterne "half promised" to hold back the letter, he finally sent it, after opening it and adding a strange postscript to the effect that it should do Mr. Hildyard no harm. The next week Sterne again wrote to the archdeacon, this time humbly apologizing for his heat. "It was my anger," he said finely, "and not me, so I beg this may go to sleep in peace with the rest." But it was too late for peace, though the archdeacon himself greatly wished it; for Dr. Sterne was soon informed of what had occurred in the bookseller's shop. On the sixth of the following December he signed the reprobation of his nephew in a letter to Archdeacon Blackburne, beginning: "Good Mr. Archdeacon,

"I will beg Leave to rely upon your Pardon for taking the Liberty I do with you in relation to your Turns of preaching in the Minster. What occasions it, is Mr. Hildyard's employing the last time the only person unacceptable to me in the whole Church, an ungrateful and unworthy Nephew of my own, the Vicar of Sutton; and I should be much obliged to you, if you woud please either to appoint any person yourself, or leave it to your Register to appoint one when you are not here. If any of my turns woud suit you better than your own, I woud change with you."

Despite this brand upon him, it seemed for the moment as if the Vicar of Sutton might win in the struggle with his uncle. Joined with Dr. Sterne against him were Archbishop Hutton and Dr. Francis Topham, the legal adviser to many of the clergy. For him were Dean Fountayne, Archdeacon Blackburne, Chancellor Herring, and most of the active men in the York chapter, including the two resident canons—Charles Cowper and William Berdmore, a man, said Sterne, "of a gentle and pacific temper,"—and Jacob Custobadie, registrar and chamberlain to the dean and chapter. Besides all these sympathizers, a close friendship was forming between Sterne and Thomas, fourth Viscount Fauconberg of Newburgh Priory, in whose extensive manor lay Sutton-on-the-Forest and other townships in the York valley. The viscount (created earl in 1756) was then a lord of his Majesty's bed-chamber and member of the Privy Council. His rank and his

age—he was above fifty years old—perhaps precluded the easy intercourse that the Vicar of Sutton enjoyed with his fellow canons and prebendaries. He was rather a patron to whom Sterne looked for another and a better living. But under the circumstances, any signal preferment was impossible, for it would require the sanction of the Archbishop of York, with whom the Vicar of Sutton was out of favor. When, for example, the perpetual curacy of Coxwold, within the nomination of Lord Fauconberg, became vacant in 1753, Sterne had to be passed by for his former curate, Richard Wilkinson.

There were, however, within the sole gift of his friends several small offices that might be bestowed upon him as a mark of favor and confidence. In conjunction with Dean Fountayne, Lord Fauconberg led the way by appointing Sterne Commissary of the Peculiar and Spiritual Jurisdiction of Alne and Tollerton, which included also Skelton and Wigginton—parishes in the North Riding over which the Fauconbergs had exercised, under the Dean of York, important rights since the dissolution of the monasteries. On December 29, 1750, three weeks after he had been denounced by his uncle, Sterne appeared at the deanery, where he took the usual oaths and designated his surrogates who were to act in his stead in case of absence.* Six months later fell vacant the similar Commissaryship of the Peculiar Court of Pickering and Pocklington, which formed a part of the dean's immediate jurisdiction, independent of the archbishop or the York chapter. For this office were pitted against each other Laurence Sterne and Dr. Topham, his uncle's candidate. After a noisy clash of arms, during which the lie was freely passed, Sterne received the appointment.

Behind Dean Fountayne's efforts in behalf of Sterne there was a piece of secret history, which may now be related. At Commencement in 1751, the dean went up to Cambridge for the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In order to qualify for this honor, it was necessary for him to preach a sermon in Latin—called *Concio ad Clerum*—before the university. Not being able to write it himself, he appealed to Sterne, who composed

* The record of the appointment in the Diocesan Registry of York is accompanied by memoranda of the annual visitations made by Sterne and his surrogates, beginning in 1751 and ending in 1767.

it for him. Ten years later, when the humor of the situation had faded, and Sterne was in a less generous mood towards the dean, he threatened to have the sermon printed over his own name, and remarked: "He got honour by it—what got I? Nothing"^{*} That is, nothing but two lean commissaryships.

The two offices that Sterne thus obtained as a reward for his facility in writing Latin were as much civil as ecclesiastical. It was in both cases the incumbent's duty to make annual visitations of the clergy within his jurisdiction for proving wills and granting letters of administration, for swearing in church wardens and receiving their presentments of ecclesiastical offences, and for looking after the morals of the district generally. The fees from the two commissaryships both together amounted to but little. From the first Sterne received in no year more than two pounds and some odd shillings, and the second was estimated at only five or six guineas. But they were much coveted by cathedral officials, for they gave the incumbent an honorable position among the clergy of the diocese as a direct representative of the Dean of York and the Lord of the Manor.

It is not said how Dr. Sterne regarded these honors to his ungrateful nephew or his appointment the year before as chaplain to Sir William Pennyman, whereby he was enabled to preach an extraordinary sermon before an extraordinary congregation in the great cathedral. But that they set his wrath in a flame may be inferred from the brutal course which he was now taking to crush him forever. "When to justify a private appetite," says the author of *Tristram Shandy*, conveying a passage from Archbishop Tenison on Lord Bacon, "it is once resolved upon, that an innocent and helpless creature shall be sacrificed, 'tis an easy matter to pick up sticks enough from any thicket where it has strayed, to make a fire to offer it up with." So it was in this case. Sterne's ill treatment of his mother and sister Catherine—still a persisting legend—had long been given out by Dr. Sterne as the first cause of estrangement. After the death of Roger Sterne, his widow and daughter, as has been said in a previous chapter, settled on a

* *Memorandums* in W. H. Arnold, *Ventures in Book Collecting*, 164 (New York, 1923). See also this biography, II, 262-264.

government pension at Clonmel in Ireland. Sometime in 1742, they came over to England on hearing that Laurie had married an heiress. For a time they were persuaded to live in Chester, but by 1747 they had moved to York, near what they supposed was inexhaustible wealth. Thenceforth these unfortunate women were tossed to and fro in the quarrel, not as any real cause of it but as available weapons. At various times the nephew tried to patch up a friendship with his uncle, but all attempts were vain. As early as 1747, he wrote to Dr. Sterne, requesting him to arrange a conference with his wife instead of himself, that there might be no explosion of temper. And late in 1750, Dean Fountayne sought to bring together mother, son, and uncle for a complete understanding. This friendly mediation also failed. Three months later Dr. Sterne struck his final blow. He placed Mrs. Sterne and her daughter Catherine in some charitable institution at York, perhaps the workhouse or “the common gaol,” and then spread the report that they were there by neglect of the Vicar of Sutton. Stunned by the blow, Laurence Sterne at once sat down and wrote the following long letter, dated Sutton, April 5, 1751, to his uncle in defence of his conduct:

“Sir,—’Tis now three years since I troubled you with a letter in vindication of myself in regard to my Mother, in which that I might give you all imaginable conviction, how barbarously she had dealt by me, and at the same time how grossly she had deceived you by the misrepresentation which I found she had made of my behaviour towards her—I desired my wife might have leave to wait upon you to lay the state of our circumstances fairly before you, and with that the account of what we had done for my Mother, that from a view of both together you might be *convinced* how much my Mother had complained *without reason*.

“My motive for offering to send my wife rather than myself upon this particular business, being first merely to avoid the occasion of any heat which might arise betwixt you and me upon any thing foreign to the Errand, which might possibly disappoint the end of it—and secondly as I had reason to think your passions were pre-engaged in this affair and that the respect you owed my wife as a gentlewoman would be a check against their breaking out; and consequently that

you would be more likely to give her a candid hearing, which was all I wished, and indeed all that a plain story to be told without Art or Management could possibly stand in want of. As you had thought proper to concern yourself in my Mother's complaints against me, I took it for granted you *could* not deny me so plain a piece of Justice. So that when you wrote me word back by my servant 'You desired to be excused from any conference with my wife, but that I might appear before you' ——As I foresaw such an Interview with the sense I had of such a treatment was likely to produce nothing but an angry expostulation (which could do no good, but might do hurt), I begged *in my turn* to be excused; and as you had already refused so unexceptionable an offer of hearing my defence, I supposed in course you would be silent for ever after upon that Head; and therefore I concluded with saying, 'as I was under no necessity of applying to you and wanted no man's direction or advice in my own private concerns, I would make myself as easy as I could, with the consciousness of having done my Duty and of being able to prove I had whenever I thought fit, and for the future that I was determined never to give you any further trouble upon that subject.'

"In this resolution I have kept for three years and should have continued to the end of my life—but being told of late by some of my friends that this clamour has been kept up against me, and by as singular a Stroke of Ill design as could be levelled against a defenceless man, who lives retired in the country and has few opportunities of disabusing the world; that my Mother has moreover been fixed in that very place where a hard report might do me (as a Clergyman) the most real disservice*——I was roused by the advice of my friends to think of some way of defending myself, which I own I should have set about immediately by telling my story publickly to the world but for the following inconvenience, that I could not do myself justice this way without doing myself an injury at the same time by laying open the nakedness of my circumstances, which for aught I knew was likely to make me suffer more in the opinion of one half of the world than I could possibly gain from the other part of it by the clearest defence that could be made.

* "The common gaol."

"Under the distress of this vexatious alternative I went directly to my old friend and college acquaintance, our worthy Dean, and laid open the hardship of my situation, begging his advice what I should best do to extricate myself. His opinion was that there was nothing better than to have a Meeting, face to face with you, and my Mother; and with his usual friendship and humanity he undertook to use his best offices to procure it for me.

"Accordingly about three months ago he took an opportunity of making you this request, which he told me you desired only to defer till the hurry of your Nunnery cause was over.

"Since the determination of that affair he has put you in mind of what you gave me hopes of, but without success; you having (as he tells me) absolutely refused now to hear one word of what I have to say. The denying me this piece of common right is the hardest measure that a man in my situation could receive, and though the whole inconvenience of it may be thought to fall, as intended, directly upon me, yet I wish, Dr. Sterne, a great part of it may not rebound upon yourself. For why, may any one ask, why will you interest yourself in a complaint against your Nephew if you are determined against hearing what he has to say for himself?—and if you thus deny him every opportunity he seeks of doing himself justice? Is it not too plain you do not wish to find him justified, or that you do not care to lose the uses of such a handle against him? However it may seem to others, the case appearing in this light to me, it has determined me, contrary to my former promise 'of giving you no further trouble'—
to add this, which is not to solicit again what you have denied me to the Dean, (for after what I have felt from so hard a Treatment, I would not accept of it, should the Offer come now from yourself.)—But my intent is by a plain and honest narrative of my Behaviour, and my Mother's too, to disarm you for the future; being determined since you would not hear me face to face with my accusers, that you shall not go unconvinced or at least not uninformed of the true state of the Case.

“From my Father’s death to the time I settled in the world, which was eleven years, my Mother lived in Ireland, and as during all that time I was not in a condition to furnish her with money, I seldom heard from her; and when I did, the account I generally had was, that by the help of an Embroidery school which she kept, and by the punctual payment of her pension, which is £20 a year, she lived well, and would have done so to this hour had not the news that I had married a woman of fortune hastened her over to England.

“The very hour I received notice of her landing at Liverpool I took post to prevent her coming nearer me, stayed three days with her, used all the arguments I could fairly to engage her to return to Ireland, and end her days with her own relations.

“I convinced her that besides the interest of my wife’s fortune, I had then but a bare hundred pounds a year; out of which my ill health obliged me to keep a curate, that we had moreover ourselves to keep, and in that sort of decency which left it not in our power to give her much; that what we could spare she should as certainly receive in Ireland as here; that the place she had left was a cheap country—her native one, and where she was sensible £20 a year was more than equal to thirty here, besides the discount of having her pension paid in England where it was not due and the utter impossibility I was under of making up so many deficiencies.

“I concluded with representing to her the inhumanity of a Mother *able* to maintain herself, thus forcing herself as a burden upon a Son who was scarce able to support himself without breaking in upon the future support of another person whom she might imagine was much dearer to me.

“In short I summed up all those arguments with making her a present of twenty guineas, which with a present of Cloathes etc. which I had given her the day before, I doubted not would have the effect I wanted. But I was much mistaken, for though she heard me with attention, yet as soon as she had got the money into her pocket, she told me with an air of the utmost insolence ‘That as for going back to live in Ireland, she was determined to show me no such sport, that she had

found I had married a wife who had brought me a fortune, and she was resolved to enjoy her share of it, and live the rest of her days at her ease either at York or Chester.'

"I need not swell this letter with all I said upon the unreasonableness of such a determination; it is sufficient to inform you that, all I did say proving to no purpose, I was forced to leave her in her resolution; and notwithstanding so much provocation, I took my leave with assuring her 'That though my Income was strait I should not forget I was a son, though she had forgot she was a *mother*.'

"From Liverpool, as she had determined, she went with my sister to fix at Chester, where, though she had little just grounds for such an expectation, she found me better than my word, for we were kind to her above our power, and common justice to ourselves; and though it went hard enough down with us to reflect we were supporting both her and my sister in the pleasures and advantages of a town-life which for prudent reasons we denied ourselves, yet still we were weak enough to do it for five years together, though I own not without continual remonstrances on my side as well as perpetual clamours on theirs, which you will naturally imagine to have been the case when all that was given was thought as much above reason by the one, as it fell *below* the Expectations of the other.

"In this situation of things betwixt us, in the year '44 my sister was sent from Chester by order of my mother to York, that she might make her complaints to you, and engage you to second them in these unreasonable claims upon us.

"This was the intent of her coming, though the pretence of her journey (of which I bore the expences) was to *make* a month's visit to me, or rather a month's experiment of my further weakness.—She stayed her time or longer—was received by us with all kindness, was sent back at my own charge with my own servant and horses, with five guineas which I gave her in her pocket, and a six and thirty piece which my wife put into her hand as she took horse.

"In what light she represented so much affection and generosity I refer to your memory of the account she gave you of it in her return through York. But for very strong reasons I believe she concealed from you all that was necessary to make a proper handle of us both; which double Game by the

bye, my Mother has played over again upon us, for the same purposes since she came to York, of which you will see a proof by and bye.

"But to return to my sister. As we were not able to give her a fortune, and were as little able to maintain her as she expected—therefore, as the truest mark of our friendship in such a situation, my wife and self took no small pains, the time she was with us to turn her thoughts to some way of depending upon her own industry, in which we offered her all imaginable assistance; first by proposing to her that, if she would set herself to learn the business of a Mantuamaker, as soon as she could get insight enough into it to make a Gown and set up for herself, '*That* we would give her £30 to begin the world and support her till business fell in; or, if she would go into a Milliner's shop in London, my wife engaged not only to get her into a shop where she should have £10 a year wages, but to equip her with cloathes etc. properly for the place; or lastly, if she liked it better, as my Wife had then an opportunity of recommending her to the family of one of the first of our Nobility—she undertook to get her a creditable place in it, where she would receive no less than eight or ten pounds a year wages with other advantages.' My sister showed no seeming opposition to either of the two last proposals till my wife had wrote and got a favourable answer to the one, and an immediate offer of the other. It will astonish you, Sir, when I tell you she rejected them with the utmost scorn, telling me I might send my own children to service when I had any, but for her part, as she was the daughter of a gentleman, *she would not disgrace* herself but would live as such. Notwithstanding so absurd an instance of her folly, which might have disengaged me from any further concern, yet I persisted in doing what I thought was right; and though after this the tokens of our kindness were neither so great nor so frequent as before, yet nevertheless we continued sending what we could conveniently spare.

"It is not usual to take receipts for presents made; so that as I have not many vouchers of that kind; and my Mother has more than once denied the money I have sent her, even to my own face, I have little expectation of such acknowledgements as she ought to make. But this I solemnly declare upon

the nearest computation we can make, that in money, cloathes, and other presents we are more than £90 poorer for what we have given and remitted to them. In one of these remittances (which was the summer [of] my sisters visit) and which as I remember was a small bill drawn for £3 by Mr. Ricard upon Mr. Boldero,* after my Mother had got the money in Chester for the bill, she peremptorily denied the receipt of it. I naturally supposed some mistake of Mr. Ricard in directing —— However that she might not be a sufferer by the disappointment, I immediately sent another bill for as much more; but withal said, as Mr. Ricard could prove his sending her the Bill, I was determined to trace out *who* had got my money; upon which she wrote word back that she had received it herself but had *forgot it*. You will the more readily believe this when I inform you, that in December, '47, when my Mother went to your house to complain she could not get a *farthing* from me, that she carried with her *ten guineas* in her pocket, which I had given her but two days before. If she could *forget* such a sum, I had reason to *remember* it, for when I gave it I did not leave myself one guinea in the house to befriend my wife, though then within one day of her labour, and under an apparent necessity of a man-midwife to attend her.

"What *uses* she made of this ungenerous concealment I refer again to yourself——But I suppose they were the same as in my sister's case, to make a penny of us both.

"When I gave her this sum, I desired she would go and acquaint you with it, and moreover took that occasion to tell her I would give her £8 every year whilst I lived. The week after she wrote me word she had been with you, and was determined not to accept that offer unless I would settle the £8 upon her out of my Wife's fortune, and chargeable upon it in case my wife should be left a widow. This she added was *your* particular advice, which without better evidence I am not yet willing to believe; because, though you do not yet know the particulars of my Wife's fortune—you must know so much of it, was such an event as my death to happen shortly, without such a burden as this upon my widow and my child, *that Mrs. Sterne would be as much distressed, and as undeservedly so as*

* Arthur Ricard, Sr., and John Boldero, gentlemen of York.

any widow in Great Britain: and though I know as well as you and my Mother that I have a *power in law* to lay her open to all the terrors of such a melancholy situation—that I feel I have *no power* in equity or in conscience to do so; and I will add in her behalf, considering how much she has merited at my hands as the best of wives, that was I capable of being worried into so cruel a measure as to give away hers, and her child's bread upon the clamour which you and my Mother have raised—that I should not only be the weakest but the *worst man* that ever woman trusted with all she had.

“Was I, Sir, to die this night, I have not more than the very Income of £20 a year (which my mother enjoys) to divide equally betwixt my Wife, a helpless child, and perhaps a third unhappy sharer, that might come into the world some months after its father's death to claim its part. The false modesty of not being able to declare this, has made me thus long a prey to my Mother, and to this clamour raised against me; and since I have made known thus much of my condition as an honest man, it becomes me to add, *that I think I have no right* to apply one shilling of my Income to any other purpose but that of laying by a provision for my wife and child: and that it will be time enough (if then) to add somewhat to my Mother's pension of £20 a year when I have as much to leave my Wife, who besides the duties I owe her of a Husband and the father of a dear child, has this further claim:—that she whose bread I am thus defending was the person who brought it into the family, and whose birth and education would ill enable her to struggle in the world without it—that the other person who now claims it from her, and has raised us so much sorrow upon that score brought not one sixpence into the family—and though it would give me pain enough to report it upon any other occasion, that she was the daughter of no other than a poor Suttler who followed the camp in Flanders, was neither born nor bred to the expectation of a fourth part of what the government allows her; and therefore has reason to be contented with such a provision, though double the sum would be nakedness to my wife.

“I suppose this representation will be a sufficient answer to

any one who expects no more from a man than what the difficulties under which he acts will enable him to perform. For those who expect more, I leave them to their expectations, and conclude this long and hasty wrote letter, with declaring that the relation in which I stand to you inclines me to exclude you from the number of the last. For notwithstanding the hardest measure that ever man received, continued on your side without any provocation on mine, without ever once being told my fault, or conscious of ever committing one which deserved an unkind look from you—notwithstanding this, and the bitterness of ten years' unwearied persecution, that I retain that sense of the service you did me at my first setting out in the world, which becomes a man inclined to be grateful, and that I am

“Sir,

“your once much obliged though now

“your much injured nephew,

“Laurence Sterne”

This “plain and honest narrative,” exactly contemporary with the incidents described in it, gives the lie direct to the epigram of Horace Walpole’s, so neatly expressed by Lord Byron, who said, with reference to a scene in the *Sentimental Journey*, that Sterne “preferred whining over a dead ass to relieving a living mother.” It likewise explains the tradition, coming from John Croft, that Sterne left his mother to die in “the common gaol at York in a wretched condition, or soon after she was released.”* If she was confined there as a vagrant, it was by order of Dr. Sterne that he might do his

* The story was told in its most complete form in a letter to George Whatley, treasurer of the London Foundling Hospital, from the Rev. Daniel Watson, Vicar of Leake, near Coxwold, in Sterne’s time. Under date of January 10, 1776, Watson wrote:

“Shall I tell you what York scandal says? *viz.*: that Sterne, when possessed of preferment of £300 a year, would not pay £10 to release his mother out of Ousebridge prison, when poverty was her only fault, and her character so good that two of her neighbours clubbed to set her at liberty, to gain a livelihood, as she had been accustomed to do, by taking in washing. Yet this was the man whose fine feelings gave the world the story of Le Fevre and the *Sentimental Journey*. Do you not feel as if something hurt you more than a cut across your finger at reading this? Talking on benevolence, or writing about it, in the

nephew, "as a clergyman, the most real disservice" in his power. The letter is throughout a vindication of Sterne's conduct, so far as there can be any vindication of a son's break with his mother. Whatever else may be said of Sterne he was no niggard. He gave his mother and sister freely of his income and would have made it an allowance. It was neither just nor reasonable to ask him to settle upon them an annuity chargeable upon his wife's small estate. No one can have any patience with his sister Catherine who refused the chance to earn an honest living. His mother was no doubt vulgar, turbulent, and untrustworthy, for Dr. Sterne himself, when he had no motive to the contrary, spoke of her temper as "clamourous and rapacious."

And yet, to say the truth, Sterne's vindication of himself, taken in the whole, does not leave the best impression of his own character. It is difficult to think of a son's casting a slur upon the birth of his mother, however humble it may have been. For once Sterne's sense of humor, to say the least, deserted him. A man of finer grain would have taken in his mother and sister and made the best of it. Mrs. Sterne and her daughter, once fixed in York under the "protection" of Dr. Sterne, certainly gave sufficient occasion for rumors, not wholly without justification, of their neglect by the young Vicar of Sutton. Dr. Sterne was thereby able to make the most of the strained relations between mother and son, yet to continue a short period, for stirring up further enmities and spreading the report of them where they would do the most harm.

most pathetic manner, and doing all the good you can without shew and parade, are very different things."

This letter, then in possession of John Towill Rutt, was published in the *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* for January, 1806.

C H A P. V.

Pastimes and Friendships

S TERNE had not won in the long warfare with his uncle. Such at least is the intimation that he wished to convey in the sketch of Parson Yorick. “Yorick,” he says, “fought it out with all imaginable gallantry for some time; till, overpowered by numbers, and worn out at length by the calamities of the war,—but more so, by the ungenerous manner in which it was carried on,—he threw down the sword; and though he kept up his spirits in appearance to the last, he died, nevertheless, as was generally thought, quite broken-hearted.” Though Sterne did not literally die of a broken heart, he was bruised and humbled to the dust. His friends, it is true, had stood by him nobly through it all, but they were powerless to help him in the way he most needed their help. Known as he was among them as a gentleman of means, he could not in his pride go to them and “lay open the nakedness” of his condition ; to no one, except perhaps Dean Fountayne, could he go and say that his wife’s fortune was in danger of being consumed, and that he was scarce able to maintain himself on the livings he held. Attempts, too, which at times were partially successful, were made by his enemies to create misunderstandings between him and his dean.

The damp and depressing climate of the York valley was also working ruin to his delicate constitution, and he longed for a parish among the hills; but that was denied him. Like Yorick he was compelled to throw down his sword and retire to Sutton to bide his time. During the next few years we are to imagine him as still in touch with his friends at York and their intrigues, but as entering more completely into the occupations and pastimes of a country parson. “If you have three or four last Yorks Courants,” runs a letter written in the midst of parish business, to a friend in the city, “pray send one to us, for we are as much strangers to all that has pass’d amongst you, as if we were in a mine in Siberia.” Every summer he drove through the beautiful Yorkshire country to Alne and

Pickering and other villages within the jurisdiction of his commissaryships, for he performed, as the records show, his visitations with scrupulous regularity. He made friends everywhere. This is the period of his friendships, amusements, and farming. He was shuffling his cards anew for a last deal.

When Sterne, at the nadir of his fortunes, returned once more to his farming, he felt again the gnawing of the old land-hunger. He had, to be sure, no more money to invest in land; and not even enough to carry through the projects that he was forming; for he conveyed, by lease and release dated the fifth and the sixth of April, 1753, his freehold to his friends, Stephen Croft and Dr. Fountayne.* This conveyance, considering his straitened circumstances, can mean only another mortgage on the Tindall farm. But there are sometimes, as Sterne well knew, ways of obtaining land without purchase. In the eighteenth century, the favorite way was an enclosure or deforesting Act. What Sterne, unbiased by self-interest, thought of these enclosures, which deprived poor parishioners of fuel and pasturage, he has left on record in *Tristram Shandy*. Mr. Walter Shandy, it is there related, rode out with his son on a morning "to save if possible a beautiful wood, which the dean and chapter were hewing down to give to the poor"; that is, says Sterne's footnote, "to the poor in spirit, inasmuch as they divided the money amongst themselves." But in his own case, none the less for this opinion, Sterne could waive all scruples against harming the poor of his parish. At that time Sutton formed a part of the demesne of Lord Fauconberg of Newburgh Priory. Besides being lord of the manor, the earl was also "seized of several cottages, front-steeds, lands, and tenements" within the township. The second large landowner was the squire, Philip Harland, who, in addition to his "divers freehold messuages," had inherited from his father a lease of the rectory, including the greater tithes. Third in the list came Sterne as vicar of the parish and as owner of a "freehold messuage" in his own right. The three men, working together, easily obtained, through the influence of Lord Fauconberg, an Act of Parliament for enclosing most of those lands of Sutton which had long lain common.

* The conveyance was registered at Northallerton on May 2, 1753.

The lands in question consisted, say the Articles of Agreement* bearing date January 15, 1756, of "six common Fields," containing "Thirteen Hundred Acres of Land, or upwards, and called or known by the Names of the North-field, Enhams, Murton-field, Thorp-field, South-field and West-field, . . . also certain common Meadow Grounds . . . called White-Car-Ings, Esk, and Sharoms, and also certain large and extensive Commons, called Brown Moor, Stockhill Sykes, Three Nook piece, Hinderlands, the Woods," and other pieces, the names of which were not well known. There were three thousand acres altogether. Commissioners, duly authorized by the Act, were appointed to make the allotments within three years after its passage. By the terms of the final instrument, which was enrolled in the registry office at Northallerton on March 23, 1759, Sterne received in his own right, exclusive of what was due to him as vicar of the parish, six parcels of land, comprising full sixty acres, with the buildings thereon. Sterne came out of the transaction as well as if he had been one of the commissioners himself. All of his allotments, as finally arranged, were close together in the North-field on the north side of the road through the village, not far from the rectory and, it would seem, near the Tindall farm, of which he had long been the owner. For Sterne's benefit Philip Harland exchanged with him three closes in the North-field for a more distant allotment; and Lord Fauconberg most generously resigned all right and title to two tenements separated from the parsonage only by the church and churchyard. By the favors of his friends, Sterne was thus lifted into a small country squire who cultivated his lands and had cottages for his laborers. In the meantime, he was growing, in rivalry to the squire, huge crops of wheat, barley, oats, and potatoes, bringing under the plough new fields that had been used hitherto for pasturage.

As a relief to farming and the cure of souls, Sterne enjoyed many hours and days of careless relaxation. Common interest had brought together the parson and the squire on a better footing than formerly, though they may never have quite understood each other. It was but a few steps for either across

* The Articles of Agreement are recited in the preamble to the Sutton Enclosure Act.—*Private Acts of Parliament*, 29 George II, c. 10.

the road for a chat over their crops and cattle. Between Sterne and the Crofts, nothing ever occurred to ruffle their friendship. The parson and his wife were ever familiar guests at Stillington Hall on an evening for supper and for jests and story-telling by the fireside. At this period, too, the Sternes were beginning to drive over to Newburgh Priory for dinners, choice wines, and Lady Catherine's parties at quadrille, a fashionable game of cards which had displaced the royal ombre of Pope's day. Earlier we caught just a glimpse of Sterne skating over the marshes of Stillington Common, and shooting partridges on a Sunday afternoon, while his congregation was already seated in church waiting for his appearance after the slaughter should be over. To these old-time amusements he now added painting.

That Sterne was a painter before he wrote *Tristram Shandy*, must have been surmised by every reader of the book; for he therein employs so easily the technical terms of the art for running up parallels on the mechanics of literary expression, or for describing the poise and movement of his characters—whether it be Corporal Trim standing in the kitchen, hat in hand, as he announces to Susannah and the scullions that “Bobby is dead and buried,” or it be Mrs. Shandy listening at a keyhole to the conversation of her husband and my uncle Toby, in the attitude of “the Listening Slave with the Goddess of Silence at his back.” On his famous mock dedication to any duke, marquis, or earl in his Majesty’s dominions who may have fifty pounds to pay for it, Sterne remarks: “The design, your Lordship sees, is good,—the colouring transparent,—the drawing not amiss;—or to speak more like a man of science,—and measure my piece in the painter’s scale, divided into 20,—I believe, my Lord, the outlines will turn out as 12,—the composition as 9,—the colouring as 6,—the expression 13 and a half,—and the design—if I may be allowed, my Lord, to understand my own *design*, and supposing absolute perfection in designing, to be as 20,—I think it cannot well fall short of 19. Besides all this,—there is keeping in it, and the dark strokes in the HOBBY-HORSE, (which is a secondary figure, and a kind of back-ground to the whole) give great force to the principal lights in your own figure, and make it come off wonderfully;—and besides,

there is an air of originality in the *tout ensemble*." Some pages onward Sterne tells us that "good jolly noses" in "well proportioned faces, should comprehend a full third—that is, measured downwards from the setting on of the hair." He has a hit by the way at "the honourable devices which the Penta-graphic Brethren of the brush have shewn in taking copies." Their mechanical methods, he avers, have been stolen by "the great historians," who insist upon drawing full-length portraits "against the light": a method, it may be added, that "is illiberal,—dishonest,—and hard upon the character of the man who sits." He was out of patience with the cant about "the colouring of *Titian*, the expression of *Rubens*, the grace of *Raphael*, . . . the *corregiescity* of *Corregio*, . . . or the grand contour of *Angelo*." Sterne nevertheless appreciated from afar the early masters and made a fine paragraph upon them in reference to the dash and the sudden silence of the author that comes with it at the moment the reader would have him go on:

"Just Heaven! how does the *Poco piu* and the *Poco meno* of the *Italian* artists;—the insensible MORE OR LESS, determine the precise line of beauty in the sentence, as well as in the statue! How do the slight touches of the chisel, the pencil, the pen, the fiddle-stick, *et cætera*,—give the true swell, which gives the true pleasure!—O my countrymen!—be nice;—be cautious of your language;—and never, O! never let it be forgotten upon what small particles your eloquence and your fame depend."

The amateur's first ideal was Hogarth, who could convey to the mind as much by three lines as others by three hundred. *The Analysis of Beauty*, out in 1753, Sterne recommended to his readers and, more to the point, carried over into *Tristram Shandy* its opinions and phrasing for praise and banter. He was particularly struck by Hogarth's pyramid and dark serpentine line on one of its faces, an ornament to the title-page, and by what was said of them thereafter as the beginning and end of all harmony, grace, and beauty. Beyond doubt Sterne had in mind Hogarth's distinction between the statue with its stiff lines and the living man who may conform to the line of beauty, when he placed Corporal Trim, with sermon in hand, before Dr. Slop and the Shandys:

"He stood,—for I repeat it, to take the picture of him in at one view, with his body swayed, and somewhat bent forwards,—his right leg from under him, sustaining seven-eighths of his whole weight,—the foot of his left leg, the defect of which was no disadvantage to his attitude, advanced a little,—not laterally, nor forwards, but in a line betwixt them;—his knee bent, but that not violently,—but so as to fall within the limits of the line of beauty;—and I add, of the line of science too;—for consider, it had one eighth part of his body to bear up;—so that in this case the position of the leg is determined,—because the foot could be no farther advanced, or the knee more bent, than what would allow him, mechanically to receive an eighth part of his whole weight under it,—and to carry it too.

"This I recommend to painters:—need I add,—to orators?—I think not; for unless they practise it,—they must fall upon their noses."

Sterne's humor for painting, when he became tired of shooting partridges, greatly puzzled his parishioners. From their point of view, wrote John Croft thirty years after: "They generally considered him as crazy or crackbrained. At one time he wou'd take up the gun and follow shooting till he became a good shott, then he wou'd take up the pencil and paint pictures. He chiefly copied portraits. He had a good idea of drawing, but not the least of mixing his colours. There are severall pictures of his painting at York, such as they are." Among these portraits, most of which have disappeared, is a caricature of Mrs. Sterne, signed "Pigrich f[ecit]"—"in character of execution very like to Hogarth's Politician." It has the bust of a woman and the face of a man. A half century ago, this clever and cruel caricature was engraved for Paul Stapfer's *Laurence Sterne*, but on second thought it was suppressed. It has since been reproduced in Melville's biography of the humorist.

By driving into York, Sterne might pass an afternoon any day with a congenial fellow craftsman, a certain Thomas Bridges, who was a dry wit like himself. Each painted the other on the same canvas—Sterne as clown and Bridges as quack-doctor, standing upon a platform and humbugging a crowd at a fair. Bridges holds in his outstretched right hand

a phial of his tincture, between thumb and forefinger, while gravely lauding its virtues as a panacea. Sterne, a youthful face in skull cap and ruff, hat in hand, seems ready to break into a jest at the expense of his serious companion. A medicine chest lies open between them; and in the background is a pretty street scene at York, terminating in the spire of one of the churches. This double caricature, called "The Mountebank and his Macaroni," Sterne once showed to an unknown "lady," who, on receiving it in her hands, "most cavalierly declared" that she would never part with it; and "from an excess of civility, or rather weakness," he let her keep it. Her name he wrote out and sealed in a billet so that the picture might be reclaimed after his death by his less sentimental heirs. The lady in question, I daresay, eventually changed her mind, and returned the enforced gift to Mrs. Sterne, as she was requested to do. When last heard of, the gay caricature was owned by Dr. James Atkinson (1759-1839), a York surgeon and bibliographer. He received it from his father, who was a friend of Sterne. Dr. Atkinson showed the portrait to Thomas Frog-nall Dibdin when at York in 1820, and permitted him to have it engraved for his *Bibliographical Tour*, whence it has come down to us in a good plate. Dibdin described the original as "a coarse production in oil" and yet "*a most singular original picture.*"*

For a year or more Sterne had the rare good fortune of associating with Christopher Steele and his apprentice, George Romney, who set up their joint studio at York in the autumn of 1756. Steele made a portrait of Sterne, and Romney afterwards "painted several scenes from *Tristram Shandy*," among which one had as subject Dr. Slop's arrival at Shandy Hall, bespattered with mud—a caricature, it is thought, of Dr. Burton himself, whom Romney likely knew. These, said Richard Cumberland, were raffled off by Romney for what he could get for them in the days of his poverty.† The Dr. Slop, it is certain, was so disposed of at Kendal. No further details of the comradeship are surely known, though tradition has it

* *Bibliographical, Antiquarian, and Picturesque Tour in the Northern Counties of England and Scotland*, I, 213 (London, 1838). Also this biography, II, 264.

† *European Magazine*, June, 1803.



The Sun

C. Smith Sculp.

London, April 1760.

The Mountebank and his Macaroni

that Sterne liked Romney better than Steele, and would have sat to him but for offending the elder colleague. Perhaps Sterne studied with them, for he learned from some source a new manner. Caricature in imitation of Hogarth, he continued to practise, it is true, down to the end of his life. A jolly tail-piece—two cocks fighting—to a pamphlet of 1759 is likely Sterne's; and for the amusement of his friends, he illustrated a copy of the *Sentimental Journey*. But along with sketches of this kind, he tried his hand at ideal portraits in sylvan background, a few of which, though of later date, may have survived.

While at Rome in 1766, Sterne perhaps met Michael Wodhull of Thenford, the translator of Euripides, who was preparing for the press a collection of original poems, some of which had been issued as pamphlets. When the volume appeared in 1772, it contained three illustrations (not in the pamphlets) bearing on the left corner the name of "L. Stern del Romae," and on the right the name of I. A. Faldoni, evidently a misprint for G. A. Faldoni, a well-known engraver of the period. Over these designs of "L. Stern" hangs a mystery that has never been cleared up. It is rather more probable that they were made by a name-sake of Sterne's—one Lewis Stern (1708-77), who is said to have painted "game and other birds, flowers, fruit, and scriptural subjects in admirable style."* On the other hand, they were attributed to Laurence Sterne, without question, in the first collected edition of his works, brought out by his original publishers in 1780. If the curious designs are really Sterne's, they show the humor of the author who did not care to illustrate his own works for the public, but was quite willing to aid a friend. One of them represents a dryad reclining by a sedgy stream and gazing upon an Arcadian landscape. Another, adorning an ode to the Muses, has Pegasus in the foreground before the spring Hippocrene, which has just gushed from the solid rock in abundant streams, under the blow of his hoof, still uplifted; and above rises Mount Helicon, thickly wooded up to the temple of the Muses, whither travellers are climbing their way. Much in the same style is the third sketch for a stanza or two in an

* *Notes and Queries*, third series, VII, 53.

ode to Miss Sarah Fowler, the loveliest of all maids in the train of the Graces. Poesy stands erect, with lyre resting on her left arm, by a glassy pool that reflects her beauty; and above her head, encircled with a myrtle wreath, hover a group of cupids. With face turned towards Poesy, a deep-breasted nymph—is it Miss Sarah Fowler?—reclines on an urn, from the mouth of which she is pouring a libation of crystal waters into the stream beneath.

During these years of painting when Sterne frequently went into York for a day with Bridges or Steele and Romney, he formed a close friendship with “the Rev. Mr. Blake,” a brother of the cloth with whom he had long been acquainted. The clergyman in question was the Rev. John Blake, a son of Zachary Blake, rector of Goldsborough and master of the Royal Grammar School in the Horse Fair near York. Ten years younger than Sterne, John Blake graduated at Christ Church, Oxford, Bachelor of Arts in 1743, and Master of Arts in 1746. While still a student at Oxford, he was ordained deacon by the Archbishop of York on June 9, 1745; and priest on June 14, 1747. His long residence at the university indicates that he was preparing himself for the instruction of youth. But in the meantime he served curacies at Wiggington, a small parish on the road midway between York and Sutton, and at St. Saviour’s, an ancient church within the city. On December 2, 1756, he was collated by the Archbishop of York to the living of Catton, on the river Derwent, a few miles above Elvington, the seat of Sterne’s ancestors. His father becoming superannuated by this time, he succeeded him in the Royal Grammar School, under license of the dean and chapter, on May 13, 1757.* Blake was not only a scholar fully equipped for his post; he was also an active citizen whose name appears at intervals in the *York Courant*, as manager of the charity schools and contributor to the county hospital.

Through the summer and autumn of 1758, Sterne and Blake were engaged in a brisk correspondence, which was carried on by special messengers between York and Sutton. At that time the young master of the grammar school was in sore

* With the exception of his election to the grammar school, all of Blake’s ecclesiastical appointments, including his admission to holy orders, are recorded in the Institutions of the York Diocese.

distress over the miscarriage of proposals for the hand of a "Miss Ash," a small heiress, living across the street with her widowed mother. The woman whom he wished to marry was perhaps Margaret, daughter of Elizabeth Ash, widow, who is described in her will as residing in the parish of St. John's, Micklegate, and possessing an estate at Tollerton. Sterne, who was called in for advice about the marriage settlement, warned his friend against a crafty grandmother, and an unscrupulous lawyer and justice of the peace, one John Stanhope, who was trying to enter the case. "The whole appears," wrote Sterne, remembering his Rabelais, "what I but too shrewdly suspected, a contexture of plots against your fortune and person, grand mama standing first in the *dramatis personæ*, the Loup Garou, or raw head and bloody bones, to frighten Master Jacky into silence, and make him go to bed with Missy, *supperless* and in peace——Stanhope, the lawyer, behind the scenes, ready to be call'd in to do his part, either to frighten or outwit you, in case the terror of grand mama should not do the business without him. Miss's part was to play them off upon your good nature in their turns, and give proper reports how the plot wrought. But more of this allegory another time. In the meanwhile, our stedfast council and opinion is, to treat with Stanhope upon no terms either in person or proxy. . . . Keep clear of him by all means, and for this additional reason, namely, that was he call'd in either at first or last, you lose the advantage as well as opportunity of an honorable retreat which is in your power the moment they reject your proposals, but will never be so again after you refer to him." Sterne's guiding hand seemed at times to be bringing the affair to a happy conclusion, but in the end he was unable to cope with the strategy of the astute lawyer; for Blake did not marry his "Miss Ash"; and the Margaret Ash, with whom we have identified her, became the wife of William Clark of Goodmanham, Yorkshire, where, according to the will of her mother,* which was drawn by Stanhope, Mrs. Elizabeth Ash held the right of presentation to the parish church and rectory.

"Mrs. Ash and Miss" were much annoyed, there are reasons for thinking, by the interference of the Vicar of Sutton.

* The will of Mrs. Elizabeth Ash was proved in the Prerogative Court of York, January 22, 1774.

When Blake came out to Sutton to dine and confer with Sterne, it was his custom to make a secret of it to "the ladies over the way"; and when Sterne, obedient to his friend's "whistle," hurried off to York, he sometimes chose the evening, that he might not be discovered by those whom he would not fall in with for "fifty pounds." There were harmless secrets, too, which the vicar wished to keep from Mrs. Sterne. "I tore off," runs an exquisite passage in a letter to Blake, "I tore off the bottom of yours before I let my wife see it, *to save a Lye*. However, she has since observed the curtailment, and seem'd very desirous of knowing what it contain'd—which I conceal, and only said 'twas something that no way concerned *her or me*; so say the same if she interrogates." Tell a lie to save a lie is a saying that would have done honor to Lord Bacon. The philosopher's *tell a lie to find a troth* lacks the color as well as the humor of the clergyman's mandate to his brother in the cure of souls.

Eventually Sterne found it inconvenient to have Blake's letters lying about the rectory, and so he burned them one by one as they arrived and were read. On the other hand, Blake kept those he received from Sterne. Forty years ago they were owned by the late A. H. Hudson of York, who remembered them "as very long, written upon foolscap, and very amusing." From him they passed into a private collection, and thence to a dealer who disposed of them singly. Incomplete, mutilated, and out of chronological order, most of them were published by Percy Fitzgerald in his memoir of Sterne.

Despite their incompleteness, these letters to Blake are quite sufficient to let us into what Sterne was doing near the close of his residence at Sutton. Extracts from them have already been quoted for Sterne's ventures in farming. The life of a rural parson, one may see, was fast becoming irksome to him. Though the year brought large returns in oats and barley, the harvesting and threshing of his grain, which at one time seemed in danger of sprouting, kept him at home away from his friends at York. Once or twice he complained of bad roads and bad weather, of which he stood in mortal terror, for the damps of the York valley brought on his cough and asthma. One rainy night it was ten o'clock before the vicar and his

wife reached Sutton after a visit to York "owing to vile accidents to which journiers are exposed."

Again on a morning when they were ready to take a wheel into the city to be with their friend on his birthday, they were prevented by a terrible downpour. So in the afternoon Sterne sent into York his "sinful Amen"—the facetious name for his clerk—to tell Blake how the matter stood and to say that he was considering the affair with Miss Ash "in all its shapes and circumstances." We really would have come in person, said Sterne, if we could. "We have waited dress'd and ready to set out ever since nine this morning, in hopes to snatch any intermission of one of the most heavy rains I ever knew,—but we are destined not to go,—for the day grows worse and worse upon our hands, and the sky gathering in on all sides leaves no prospect of any but a most dismal going and coming, and not without danger, as the roads are full of water—What remains, but that we undress ourselves, and wish you absent, what we would most gladly have wish'd you present —all happiness and many fair and less ominous birth days, than our prospect affords us." "I wish to God," to combine other letters, "you could some day ride out next week, and breakfast and dine with us. . . . However, I will come over at your desire, but it cannot be tomorrow, because all hands are to be employed in cutting my barley, which is now shaking with this vile wind—however, the next day (Friday) I will be with you by twelve and eat a portion of your own dinner and confer till three o'clock, in case the day is fair, if not the day after, &c., &c."

To free himself from local entanglements, Sterne was planning to lease his lands and tithes, in the expectation of peace and happiness for the next year and ever after. But that was not yet. His affairs, he complained, had been thrown into utter confusion by a parliamentary election that took place in the autumn of 1758. To add to Sterne's worries, the health of his daughter Lydia, now eleven years old, was causing him great anxiety. On rising one morning with the intention of an early start for York, he found Lydia so far relapsing that he sent a messenger instead with "two gooses" to say that he must "stay and wait till the afternoon to see if my poor girl can be left. She is very much out of all sorts; and our operator here,

tho' a very penetrating man, seems puzzled about her case. If something favourable does not turn out to-day about her case, I will send for Dealtry," that is, Dr. John Dealtry, a Whig physician at York. His own health, too, was fast breaking under the strain.

Sterne nevertheless managed to ride into York every week or two except in the harvest season. He took his own turn in the cathedral on the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, coming in early for breakfast with Blake; and he was again forced out of his "shell in Xmas week to preach Innocents" in place of Thomas Hurdis, Prebendary of Strensall. The sermon on the latter occasion seems to have been the one entitled *The Character of Herod*, as published in the usual collections. Sterne set out with "Rachel weeping for her children," but soon broke from his text and the scant Biblical narrative for a portrait of Herod on the lines of Josephus. Herod's complicated character—his generosity and munificence and cruelty—was "summed up in three words—That he was a man of unbounded ambition, who stuck at nothing to gratify it." The preacher closed with a story to the point out of Plutarch, followed by a wish that God in his mercy might "defend mankind from future experiments" in the slaughter of innocent people.

When Mrs. Sterne accompanied her husband into York for a day with their friends or "to make her last marketings for the year," one or both of them would dine with Thomas Bridges and his wife, or at the house of the Rev. Charles Cowper, Prebendary of Riccall. Sterne rather preferred to leave his wife with Mrs. Cowper on an afternoon, and to go by himself to the concert at the Assembly Rooms, not only for the music but for a chat with Marmaduke Fothergill the younger, or other friends that he was likely to fall in with there. In the round of visits he took in Dr. Fountayne, if the dean were in town, Jack Taylor, Mr. Blake, and "my poor mother," whose "affair," says a letter, "is by this time ended, to *our* comfort, and, I trust, hers." After a long period of misunderstanding and estrangement, a reconciliation between mother and son had evidently been brought about by her acceptance of the allowance that was offered to her many years before. Blake, it would seem, from a dark hint or two, had

acted as mediator. For some purpose, at any rate, he was doling out money at York and sending accounts of it over to Sutton. If Sterne had time, it was his custom, though the letters say nothing about it, to stroll into the coffee-room of the George, a fine old hostelry in Coney Street, "where those who drank little wine and did not choose too much expence, might read the newspapers." To those who liked to sit there and gossip, he was well known for "a number of pleasant repartees," one of which has survived. The general drift of the story is probably true, for Sterne let it pass and Hall-Stevenson repeated an abridgement of it in the memoir of his friend.

"There was," according to the more elaborate version of the newspapers,* "a troop of horse in the town, and a gay young fellow, spoiled by the free education of the world, but with no real harm in him, was one of the officers. This gay boy, who loved all freedom in discourse, therefore hated a parson. Poor Yorick was obliged to hear healths he did not like; and would only shuffle about, or pretend deafness; but the hour was come, when these pretences were to pass no longer. The captain was in the middle of a Covent-garden story, loud, indecent, and profane in his expressions; when poor Yorick entered, he stopped on a sudden, and began, with all possible contempt and ill usage, to abuse the clergy, fixing his eye on Yorick, and pointing to him as an example on every occasion. Yorick pretended, as long as he could with any decency, not to hear his rudeness; but when that became impossible, he walked up and gravely said to him: 'Sir, I'll tell you a story. My father is an officer; and he's so brave himself, that he is fond of everything else that's brave, even to his dog; you must know we have at this time one of the finest creatures in the world, of this kind; he is the handsomest dog you ever saw, the most spirited in the world, and yet the best natured that can be imagined; so lively, that he charms everybody; but he has a cursed trick that spoils all; he never sees a clergyman, but he instantly flies at him.'—'Pray how long has he had that trick?' says the captain.—'Sir,' replies Yorick, 'ever since he was a PUPPY.' " According to Hall-Stevenson, "the young man felt the keenness of the satire, turned upon his heel, and left Sterne in triumph."

* For example, the *London Chronicle*, May 3-6, 1760.

Whenever Sterne felt the need of more complete relaxation than was afforded by York and the neighboring squires, he had but to take a trip to Scarborough, or to drive over to Skelton for a week or a fortnight with his friend, John Hall-Stevenson. On these excursions his wife never went with him. Sterne and Hall-Stevenson, when we last saw them together, were reading Rabelais under the great walnut tree at Jesus College. John Hall—his friend always dropped the Stevenson—was a son of Joseph Hall of Durham by Catharine, sister to Lawson Trotter of Skelton Castle. In 1727, Trotter, who loved travel, sold the estate to his brother-in-law, on whose death six years later it passed to John Hall as the eldest surviving son, then only fifteen years old. After trifling away three or four years at Cambridge, the young man left the university without a degree, and made the usual tour of France and Italy. Returning home towards 1740, he married in that year Anne, daughter of Ambrose Stevenson, Esq., of the Manor House in the parish of Lanchester, Durham, and assumed his wife's surname along with his own. In after times he regarded the act as "premature," for his wife's property fell short of his expectations. A few months after his marriage his mother died; and his uncle, Lawson Trotter, was afterwards driven from the country, as a "noted Jacobite," for the part he took in the insurrection of 1745. In that eventful year, while Sterne was wielding a pen for the House of Hanover, Hall-Stevenson was brandishing a sword. After the battle of Preston Pans, he formed the neighboring bucks into a company of horsemen under General Oglethorpe, who was back from Georgia. They were all finely mounted, wrote a York merchant of the time, "with every man a horse and some two," and they acted as "a flying squadron, to harass the enemy on their march and to give intelligence." "They make more noise here," it is significantly added, "than they deserve, their number being much magnified."* This appears to have

* "Letter of Stephen Thompson, a merchant, to Vice-Admiral [Henry] Medley" in *Report on Manuscripts of Lady du Cane presented to Parliament by Command of his Majesty, 77-78* (London, 1905). A fine account of Hall-Stevenson is given by J. W. Ord, *History and Antiquities of Cleveland* (London, 1846). See also Surtees, *Durham*, II, 291-292; Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, III, 86-88; Alexander Carlyle, *Autobiography*, 453-454 (Edinburgh, 1860); Paver, *Supplement*

been the most exciting incident in Hall-Stevenson's career. Once settled at Skelton, he continued to the end of his days in the easy, self-indulgent life which he had begun at Cambridge, complaining now and then of his scant fortune and of a mortgage of £2000 on his estate to a younger brother.

Hall-Stevenson possessed "a fine library," rich in old books running back into the sixteenth century, among which he sat and read on dull days and long winter evenings, now and then scribbling a political satire, or loose verse-tale in imitation of La Fontaine and other French fabulists, which were issued in the form of anonymous pamphlets with notes and quotations from Homer, Vergil, and Lucian. There was commonly a facetious dedication to himself, as the man he most respected, to the vacant reader, or to the macaronies of Medmenham Abbey and Pall Mall. The author made no claim to finished verse, writing, he said, like Grisset, only to save himself from ennui. Horace Walpole discovered "a vast deal of original humour and wit" in Mr. Hall's verses; but to Gray they "seemed to be absolute madness." Here and there they contain clever phrases, as in the opening lines of a reply to a savage attack by Smollett in the *Critical Review*:

"Ye judging Caledonian Pedlars,
That to a scribbling World give Law
Laid up engarretted, like Medlars,
Ripening asperity in Straw."

In his humor, Hall-Stevenson re-named his seat Crazy Castle. It was a rambling pile of stone rising in a series of moss-covered terraces from a stagnant and melancholy moat, the abode of frogs and water-rats, and lying on the slope of a wooded ravine, two miles and a half inland from Saltburn-by-the-Sea. At one time, its master planned extensive restorations, but Sterne dissuaded him from them, saying, in remembrance of his own repairs at Sutton, that "the sweet visions of architraves, friezes and pedaments" were but the bait of the devil to lead one on into cares, curses and debts. Better follow, he admonished his friend, the advice of St. Paul to his dis-

to Consolidated Yorkshire Visitations (British Museum, Additional MSS. 29651); and Lewis Melville, *Life and Letters of Laurence Sterne*, I, 97 (London, 1911).

ciples, that they should “sell both coat and waistcoat and go rather without shirt or sword, than leave no money in their scrip to go to Jerusalem with,” that is, to London or Paris or Rome. For the amusement of his friends and Lawson Trotter, who was travelling abroad, Hall-Stevenson made a sketch of the castle, or had it made, as a frontispiece to a volume of *Crazy Tales*, which opened with a facetious verse-description of some of the details. Midway in the description, the verses hobble on—

“A turrit also you may note,
Its glory vanish’d like a dream,
Transform’d into a pigeon-cote,
Nodding beside the sleepy stream.

“Over the Castle hangs a Tow’r,
Threatening destruction ev’ry hour,
Where owls, and bats, and the jackdaw,
Their Vespers and their Sabbath keep,
All night scream horribly, and caw,
And snore all day, in horrid sleep.

“Oft at the quarrels and the noise
Of scolding maids or idle boys;
Myriads of rooks rise up and fly,
Like Legions of damn’d souls,
As black as coals,
That foul and darken all the sky.”

A very handsome and agreeable young man, Hall-Stevenson was thoroughly liked by friends and chance acquaintance, for whom “he kept a full-spread board and wore down the steps of his cellar.” Alexander Carlyle, the Scottish divine, who crossed his path at the Dragon Inn, Harrogate, thought him “a highly accomplished and well-bred gentleman,” and was drawn to him by a “mild and courteous manner.” Mrs. Sterne, who saw him occasionally for a day at Sutton, had some misgivings about her husband’s intimacy with him; but she readily admitted that he was “a fellow of wit, though humorous; a funny, jolly soul, though somewhat splenetic; and (bating the love of women) as honest as gold.” It is a little strange at first

sight that Sterne should have made out of him Eugenius, the discreet adviser of Yorick, for Hall-Stevenson was anything but discreet. And yet he was a man of the world who knew how to still a quarrel and keep his friends all good-natured towards one another. In spite of his idleness, he carried away from Cambridge a knowledge of the classics sufficient to quote from them freely, and from his travels on the Continent was brought back an interest in French and Italian literature. As in the case of Sterne, Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding* was a book never to be forgotten.

Except for trips to London and the northern watering-places to meet friends, Hall-Stevenson shut himself up in Crazy Castle, where an inactive life brought on rheumatism and various disorders of the digestion, which were aggravated rather than helped by a free use of current nostrums. Some years of this treatment, attended with painful results, and he developed into a humorous hypochondriac of the family one may read of in *Peregrine Pickle* or *Humphry Clinker*. It was his whim to lay all his ailments to the damps of Yorkshire, especially to the cold and raw northeast wind, which was with him a synonym for death. His sleeping room, it is said, was in sight of the weather-cock—the cock was an arrow—over the old clock-tower shown in his drawing of the castle. On rising in the morning, the master looked first towards the arrow to see what the weather was to be; and if it pointed towards the northeast, he went back to bed, drew the curtains, and imagined himself *in extremis*. Sterne, who frequently bantered Hall-Stevenson on his nerves and the weather, in his letters as well as in *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey*, attempted a cure while on a visit to Crazy Castle. On a night, says the tale, he climbed the clock-tower, or engaged a boy to do so, and tied down the weather-cock in a westerly direction. After that all went well for some days until the cord broke and the arrow shot round to the northeast. Hall-Stevenson then took to his bed and Sterne went home.

The master of Skelton formed his merry Yorkshire friends into a convivial club, called the Demoniacs, in imitation of the Rabelaisian Monks of Medmenham Abbey, who were then creating great scandal in southern England. Medmenham Abbey was an ancient Cistercian monastery, beautifully situ-

ated, “by hanging woods and soft meadows,” on the Thames, between Great Marlow and Henley. In this retired place, where once dwelt the old monks, a new and profane order was established by Sir Francis Dashwood, afterwards Baron Le Despenser, Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, Chancellor of the Exchequer, etc.,—a man seldom sober. With him were associated John Wilkes the politician, Paul Whitehead the poet, Sir William Stanhope, Lord Melcombe Regis, the Earl of Sandwich, and “other hands of the first water” up to twelve—the number of the Apostles. They called themselves Franciscans after their founder. Paul Whitehead, their secretary and steward, was known as St. Paul. Besides the first twelve, there was a lower order of twelve, who acted as servants to their superiors. Over the grand entrance was written for all who entered, *Fay ce que vouldras*, which was also the famous inscription on Rabelais’s Abbey of Thélème. Every summer and at other favorable times, the Monks retired to their abbey for the worship of Satan and the Paphian Aphrodite in parody of the rites of the Church of Rome. On one occasion, it was a current story, when they were in the height of their mirth, invoking his Satanic majesty to come among them in person, Wilkes let loose a baboon decked in the conventional insignia of the devil. The consternation that followed, says the chronicler, was simply indescribable. The revellers were terrified nearly out of their senses, for they thought that the devil had really heeded their summons. The baboon, as frightened as they, leaped upon the shoulders of Lord Sandwich, who was celebrating the *messe noire*; whereupon the wicked nobleman fell upon his face, imploring first the devil and then heaven to have mercy upon his miserable soul. Soon after this incident, which could not be kept secret, the society was disbanded.*

The direct connection between this abandoned brotherhood and the Demoniacs who gathered under the roof of Crazy Castle is undeniable. Hall-Stevenson and Sterne afterwards

* For Medmenham Abbey, see Charles Johnstone, *Chrysal, or the History of a Guinea*, vol. III, bk. II, chs. XVII-XXIV (London, 1760-1765); *Letters to and from Mr. Wilkes*, I, 34-50 (London, 1769); and G. Lipscomb, *History of Buckinghamshire*, III, 615-616 (London, 1847).

numbered Wilkes, Dashwood, and other of the Monks among their intimate London friends. Hall-Stevenson may have visited Medmenham, and Dashwood, with little doubt, sometimes came down to Skelton, where he was known as "the Privy Counsellor." Sterne when away addressed the company at Skelton as "the household of faith" and sent them, in parody of the words of St. Paul, the apostolic benediction. In justice, however, to the Demoniacs, it must be said at once that they could have been only a faint reflection of the Monks of Medmenham. They were a company of noisy Yorkshire squires and parsons who assembled at Skelton for out-of-door sports during the day and for drinking and jesting through the night. To quote their host:

"Some fell to fiddling, some to fluting,
Some to shooting, some to fishing,
Others to fishing and disputing."

As at Medmenham, everyone was expected to follow his own inclinations, doing whatsoever he pleased. "Why should a man," to paraphrase Rabelais, the originator of the idea, "bring his life into subjection to rules and the hours? Why should he not give full rein to will and instinct?—eat, drink, sleep, or perhaps labour, because nature draws him that way and not because custom calls or the bell rings?" Among the Demoniacs, Hall-Stevenson was known as Antony, probably because he was at the same time a recluse, and yet in the prime essential wholly unlike the saint whose name he bore. Disliking field sports, he kept much within doors. But when Sterne came over, squire and parson made excursions together to Guisborough for sentimental visits with "Mrs. C——, Miss C——, &c"; or they drove over to Saltburn, where they amused themselves on an afternoon by racing chariots along the sandy beach, "with one wheel in the sea." Of all pastimes that took Sterne out of doors, none pleased him quite so much as this; and none could be more exhilarating. Over sands hard and firm enough for the modern automobile, the two Crazyites might run their horses for five miles to the north, even to Redcar, and then turn about for the exciting course homewards through the fresh spray of the ocean.

The fisherman of the group was the Rev. Robert Lascelles,

formerly of Durham. Graduating at Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1739, he joined Hall-Stevenson's "flying squadron" against the Jacobite raiders, and subsequently obtained the vicarage of Gilling, by Richmond in the West Riding. Late in life he published a volume of merry verses on angling, shooting, and coursing. This man of the cloth, whose fellowship Sterne especially enjoyed for his jesting, was nicknamed Panty, cut short for familiar speech from Pantagruel, the hero of Rabelais's romance. We read, too, of Andrew Irvine, a Cambridge doctor of theology, and master of the grammar school at Kirkleatham, a short distance away. Because of his resemblance to an Irishman, he was renamed Paddy Andrew.

Among other Demoniacs, not so easily identified, were the men whom Sterne affectionately addressed as "My dear Garland, Gilbert, and Cardinal Scroope." The first of the three was Nathaniel Garland, a country gentleman; and the last was likely a Yorkshire parson. An architect appears, too, under the Spanish disguise of Don Pringello, who was called over to rebuild Crazy Castle; but so great was his admiration for "the venerable remains," that he could only be prevailed upon "to add a few ornaments suitable to the stile and taste of the age it was built in." Could these men be uncovered they might prove as interesting as "Zachary," that is, Zachary Moore, whose name found its way into local history. He was the spendthrift of the company. Inheriting a rich and extensive manor at Lofthouse, some ten miles south of Skelton, he entered upon a career of riot and prodigality. "There is a tradition," says the historian of the district,* "that during his travels on the Continent his horses' shoes were made of silver; and so careless was he of money, that he would not turn his horses' head if they got loose or fell off, but replaced them with new ones." Among his strange caprices, apparently discordant with his character, was that of building a school at Lofthouse for the instruction of children in the Scriptures, the catechism, and the prayer-book. After thirty years of dissipation, he completed "the laborious work of getting to the far end of a great fortune"; and was then deserted "by the gay butterflies who had sported about him in his summer hour." By the aid of his London friends, among whom were men of "royal and ducal

* J. W. Ord, *History and Antiquities of Cleveland*, 275-278.

rank," he obtained an ensigncy in the British army and soon afterwards died at Gibraltar. Hall-Stevenson lamented his absence from Skelton in an ode beginning—

“What sober heads hast thou made ake?
How many hast thou kept from nodding?
How many wise-ones, for thy sake,
Have flown to thee, and left off plodding?”

Two colonels were sometimes with the company. One was “Colonel Hall”—George Lawson Hall, a brother of the master of Skelton, who married a daughter of Lord William Manners, and entered the army. The other colonel was probably Charles Lee, whom Alexander Carlyle met with Hall-Stevenson at Harrogate. At that time Lee was an officer on half pay. “Savage Lee,” as people called him, fought in America throughout the French and Indian War, and settling afterwards in Virginia and obtaining a major-generalship in the Continental army, he sought to wrest the supreme command from Washington. The young officer, whoever he may have been, was a quarrelsome companion, whom Hall-Stevenson found hard to manage. More remotely connected with the Demoniacs was William Hewitt—“old Hewitt”—“a very sensible old gentleman but a very great humourist,” who lived much abroad. Smollett, who met him at Scarborough and in Italy, told the story of his curious ending. Being attacked by a painful malady while at Florence in 1767, Hewitt resolved to take himself off, like Atticus, by starvation. “He saw company,” says Smollett in a note to *Humphry Clinker*, “to the last, cracked his jokes, conversed freely, and entertained his guests with music. On the third day of his fast, he found himself entirely freed of his complaint, but refused taking sustenance. He said, the most disagreeable part of the voyage was past, and he should be a cursed fool indeed to put about ship when he was just entering the harbour.” Persisting in this resolution, he soon finished his course.

The group of strange humorists that gyrated round Hall-Stevenson changed of course from year to year. One would fall out and another would be found to take his place. But Paddy and Panty, who lived near-by, might be counted upon at all times; and Sterne (sometimes called the Blackbird be-

cause of the color of his clerical dress) never missed, if he could help it, the great conclave of demons that assembled in October. "A jollier set," says the host, "never met, either before or since the flood." At night there were "joyous deliriums over the burgundy," when each contributed his share to the amusement and the jesting. Sterne fiddled, another piped, and Hall-Stevenson danced a saraband with a pair of bellows and tongs.

Sterne's love for the violin and cello and music in general, comes out again and again in *Tristram Shandy* and elsewhere. The speech and movements of his characters, would one but observe it, are all deftly attuned to musical harmony. What, for example, would my uncle Toby be, as he lays his persuasive hand upon your heart, without "that soft and irresistible *piano* of voice, which the nature of the *argumentum ad hominem* absolutely requires"? It was a shepherd's pipe that gave the exquisite tone to the scene with Maria by the roadside in Bourbonnais: "Adieu, *Maria*:—adieu, poor hapless damsels!—some time, but not *now*, I may hear thy sorrows from thy own lips—but I was deceived; for that moment she took her pipe and told me such a tale of woe with it, that I rose up, and with broken and irregular steps walk'd softly to my chaise." Yorick, it will be remembered from *Tristram Shandy*, quaintly characterized his sermons, as he marked and tied them up for future use, by an appropriate musical term. Most of them had *moderato* written across their backs, but here and there is an *adagio*, a *con strepito*, or *con l'arco*, or *senza l'arco*, etc. These are but examples. If they carry us a little away from Skelton, we certainly are brought back to an evening at the castle in that passage where Sterne tunes his *Cremona* and snaps a string:

"Ptr... r...r...ing twing—twang—prut—trut—'tis a cursed bad fiddle.—Do you know whether my fiddle's in tune or no?—trut.. prut..—They should be *fifths*.—'Tis wickedly strung—tr...a.e.i.o.u.—twang.—The bridge is a mile too high, and the sound post absolutely down,—else—trut.. prut—hark! 'tis not so bad a tone.—Diddle diddle, diddle diddle, diddle diddle, dum. . . . Twaddle diddle, twaddle diddle,—twiddle diddle,—twiddle diddle,—twudle diddle,—prut trut—krish—krash—krush."



Cragside Castle
From the frontispiece to "Cragside Tales"

The jesting, hints here and there suggest, was racy and salacious, as one should expect from avowed Pantagruelists. There were running plays upon words, especially Latin words, for the facetious quibbles in fashion with Rabelais and the learned humorists of the Renaissance—varied by the retelling of old tales from collections in the French and Italian tongues. For their correspondence Sterne and Hall-Stevenson devised a Latin of their own after the style of the famous *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*. The only one of these letters between Antonius and Laurentius ever published was written by Sterne in the midst of noisy companions at a York coffee-house, and sent over to Skelton on the eve of his setting out for London. As a Demoniac, Sterne defined for his friend in this letter the nature of the evil spirit that was driving him from home to the gaiety of the metropolis: “*Diabolus iste qui me intravit, non est diabolus vanus, aut consobrinus suus Lucifer—sed est diabolus amabundus, qui non vult sinere me esse solum . . . et tu es possessus cum eodem malo spiritu qui te tenet in deserto esse tentatum ancillis tuis, et perturbatum uxore tua.*” If we had a sure key to the book, we should doubtless find that a large number of the jests and stories in *Tristram Shandy* had once been heard at Skelton. As if it were so, many are the glimpses of Yorick and Eugenius in conversation by the fire-side and out in the fields. Especially graphic is the scene where Yorick, while telling a tawdry story “of a nun who fancied herself a shell-fish,” is interrupted by his friend, who rises, walks around the table, and takes him by the hand. Then there is that smart repartee in parody of Alexander’s reply to Parmenio, as given by Longinus *On the Sublime*:

“If I was you, quoth *Yorick*, I would drink more water, *Eugenius*—And, if I was you, *Yorick*, replied *Eugenius*, so would I.”

Sterne’s jests, commonly good-natured, could be at times sharp and bitter, for he went into wit-combats with the intention of winning, though he might come out of them, he says, “like a fool.” On one occasion his host and Panty took him to task for his brutal treatment of a coxcomb, like “the puppy” at the George Inn, who had pushed his way into their society. “This man,” said Sterne in memory of it, “lost temper with me for no reason upon earth but that I could not fall down

and worship a brazen image of learning and eloquence, which he set up, to the persecution of all true believers—I sat down upon *his altar*, and whistled in the time of his divine service —and broke down his carved work, and kicked his incense pot to the D—, so he retreated, *sed non sine felle in corde suo.*"

From this jesting and story-telling, Hall-Stevenson took the hint for his *Crazy Tales*, in which eleven of the Demoniacs relate gay intrigues "to promote good humour and cheerfulness" through a night at Skelton. Panty's tale of "The Cavalier Nun" was developed from an old monkish distich, which, slightly varied, Sterne long afterwards employed again to give point to *An Impromptu*, run off "in a few moments without stopping his pen," while the author was "thoroughly souzed." Zachary chose his theme from Bandello, drawing a parallel between the Italian bishop and Sterne. The Privy Counsellor presented an imitation of Chaucer. Antony adjusted an old tale to the boarding-school; and Sterne, beginning with the great walnut tree and other reminiscences of Cambridge, wandered off into a cock-and-bull story, such as fitted his character, though not one of the best of its kind.

Like these Chaucerian tales of Hall-Stevenson's, *Tristram Shandy*, it is almost needless to add in conclusion, also had its living counterpart in *Crazy Castle*, but after a larger and different manner. Not that Sterne, so far as we can divine him, exactly transferred to his book living portraits of the men whom he met over the rich burgundy. But it was under the hospitable roof of Skelton that he associated, in jest, argument, and dispute, with those half-mad oddities of human nature which he knew how to transform, by the aid of other memories, into Eugenius, Mr. Walter Shandy, and my uncle Toby.

C H A P. VI.

The Parson in His Library

GOOD fellowship over bright burgundy was doubtless quite sufficient for drawing Sterne to Skelton for a week or two in October and oftener. But there was another attraction for him in the library of old books that had been long collecting by his host and the family before him. Indeed, writers on Sterne, repeating what was said a century ago, have given wide currency to the tradition that the humorist found and read at Skelton most of those strange volumes that go to the learning and adornment of *Tristram Shandy*. Though the tradition is far from the truth, Sterne's intimacy with Hall-Stevenson may have led him to reading curious books for one of his recreations in the long and obscure years at Sutton. We may fancy him on his visits to Skelton poring over his friend's big folios and taking three or four of them with him as he drove home. Nearer at hand was the library of his dean and chapter, rich in manuscripts, and old treatises on law, medicine, and divinity, wherein he could have met with his humorous instances of casuistry and misplaced learning.

But the books that became a part of Sterne's mental equipment must have been his daily companions at Sutton. When he emerges from obscurity, he appears at once as a book collector on his own account. If the first money from the sale of *Tristram Shandy* went to the purchase of a carriage and a pair of horses, the surplus from the second instalment was left with a bookseller for seven hundred books which were "set up in my best room." Before his fame and the competency that came with it, Sterne's purchases must have been more restricted, but even then his income was not so small as to leave nothing for his humor. In the eighteenth century, York was the centre of the northern book trade. From the surrounding district, libraries of country gentlemen were sent in to Cæsar Ward, John Todd, and other dealers to be disposed of at auction or private sale. Auctions were also held every few weeks at inns and town-halls in the neighborhood. For a few shil-

lings Sterne could have procured beautiful folios that would now bring a handful of guineas, if they could be had at all. To Sterne's reading in this formative period, we have a trustworthy, though incomplete, index in *Tristram Shandy*. He there reflects of course himself and Hall-Stevenson in the opposite tastes of the two Shandys, both of whom are collectors, one making a specialty of military architecture and the other of the learned humorists.

Among the *facetiae* that Mr. Walter Shandy most prized, were Bouchet's *Serées*, and Bruscambille's *Pensées Facétieuses*, including a prologue upon long noses, which was bought of a London dealer for three half-crowns. The story of the purchase at the book-stall Sterne related with the passion of the bibliophile: "There are not three Bruscambille's in Christendom—said the stall-man, except what are chain'd up in the libraries of the curious. My father flung down the money as quick as lightning—took Bruscambille into his bosom—hied home from Piccadilly to Coleman-street with a treasure, without taking his hand once off from Bruscambille all the way." When in a confidential mood one day on a visit to Stillington Hall, Sterne told his friends there, as John Croft remembered it, what books he read and studied most. He placed first the *Moyen de Parvenir* of Béroalde de Verville, and added Montaigne, Rabelais, Marivaux, and Dr. Joseph Hall, "Bishop of Exeter in King James the First's reign." But he forgot, as was Sterne's way, to mention many an author that ought to have been on the list. His fireside books were as odd as the men with whom he associated at Crazy Castle. From them he drew and then cast them aside, in just the same way as he would take up his pencil for a caricature of his wife, or his gun for an afternoon with the partridges.

First in the catalogue of books read by the Vicar of Sutton were three of the world's greatest humorists—Lucian, "my dear Rabelais, and dearer Cervantes." With Lucian, by whose ashes he swore the "oath referential," Sterne was less familiar than with the other two; but we must suppose that the *Dialogues*, read at Cambridge, were taken up again in the Sutton period, for he could, when in the mood for it, fall into Lucian's tone of gay mockery. The presence of Cervantes, whom he knew through Skelton's translation of *Don Quixote*, is felt

in one place or another of every volume of *Tristram Shandy*, from the introductory sketches of Yorick and Dr. Slop on to the end, through scores of passages pervaded by this “gentle Spirit of sweetest humour.” Rabelais, though Sterne sometimes ranked him after Cervantes, was really, I should say, first in his affections. A volume of *Gargantua* or of *Pantagruel*, Yorick was accustomed to carry in “his right-hand coat pocket,” that it might be ready for the amusement of his friends, as they drew up to the fire after supper. On these occasions Yorick read to them, not from the original French—for Sterne had little acquaintance with that, though he could pick it out by the help of Cotgrave’s dictionary,—but from the current version of Ozell, a London scribbler, who spent his days in mutilating foreign classics for English readers. Ozell, text, notes, and all, Sterne had well-nigh by heart, and found them most serviceable in the act of composition. Without Rabelais, his jests, whims, anecdotes, and splendid extravagances, there would never have been a Sterne as we now know him.*

Rabelais, the most constant of his passions, drew Sterne on into the facetious tales and verses of the later Pantagruelists, both French and English, among whom he also luxuriated. The Guillaume Bouchet who delighted the heart of Mr. Walter Shandy, was a magistrate at Poitiers, where his *Serées*, or *Evening Conferences*, three volumes in the whole, began to appear in 1584. In this vivacious work, Bouchet and his friends meet at one another’s house on appointed evenings for a light supper and to relate incidents they have read of in books or heard of among their neighbors. Some one of them usually tells the main story, while the others break in with their contributions to the theme, be it of wine, water, or women, the fine arts, physicians, lawyers, or the clergy. The volumes of Bouchet are an epitome of the Gallic wit that lies scattered in the old *fabliaux* and innumerable *contes*, the aim of which is mirth and laughter.

* Sterne’s immense obligations to Ozell’s translation of Rabelais are indicated in the marginal notes to the Grenville copy of *Tristram Shandy* in the British Museum. For the humorist’s borrowings from Rabelais and other French writers, see also John Ferriar, *Illustrations of Sterne*, two vols. (second edition, London, 1812).

Of books of this kind Sterne rightly gave his preference to the *Moyen de Parvenir* or *How to Succeed*, which made its appearance in 1610, without the author's name. It was written, the critics have established, by Béroalde de Verville, a canon of the Cathedral of Tours, otherwise known for several imitations of Rabelais. As in Bouchet, the plan is a symposium, where gather for conversation and story-telling Béroalde's friends under the names of famous men and women of antiquity, such as Cæsar, Socrates, and Sappho. Laughter, eating, drinking, and sleeping are proclaimed the four cardinal virtues. The conversations run from theme to theme without any apparent connection at first sight; but they are really all ordered with great skill, the last word of each discourse giving occasion for the one following. Next to Rabelais's profusion of wit, no other book has quite so many analogies with *Tristram Shandy*.

Bruscambille, another favorite with Sterne, was the *nom de théâtre* of a comedian named Deslauriers, whose *Fantaisies* or *Pensées Facétieuses* appeared in 1612. The author imagines himself on the stage addressing his audience in whimsical prologues, harangues, and paradoxes on cuckoldry, pedantry, long and short noses, or in defence of lying or of telling the truth, as whim may seize him. Bruscambille was a perfect master of what the French call *galimatias*, a mad flow of speech in which incongruity is piled upon incongruity for comic effect. "I met," says Bruscambille, to give an extreme example of his nonsense, "I met, gentlemen and ladies, last night a large, small man with red hair who had a beard as black as pepper; he had just come from a country where, except for the animals and the people, there was no living soul." How well Sterne learned the art of Bruscambille, everyone knows who has perused his books or letters, though, it should be observed, he never went quite so far as his original in a reckless topsy-turvy of ideas and phrases. Perhaps he went the farthest when he wrote "A cow broke in (to-morrow morning) to my uncle Toby's fortifications and eat up two rations and a half of dried grass, tearing up the sod with it, which faced his horn-work and covered way."

Béroalde, Bouchet, and Bruscambille were all in the vicar's

library when it was sold after his death. With them Sterne classed Montaigne, who, though his work is of more serious import, wandered on whimsically, as everybody would have him, from one topic to another, so that the title of any one of his essays gives no clue to the content. Sterne knew his Montaigne well, not in the French but in the fine translation made by Cotton, the accomplished angler; and loved him with the affection of Thackeray, who took him, instead of an opiate, as a bedside book to prattle him to sleep when threatened by insomnia.* Nor should we forget Scarron's comic muse with skirts all bedrabbled, nor the tearful mistress of Marivaux and other French novelists with whom Sterne carried on frequent flirtations.

Last in the line (barring the sentimental Marivaux) were the English humorists—Swift and his group—who sought to fill the easy chair left vacant by Rabelais and his French descendants. To Sterne, Swift meant mainly *A Tale of a Tub*, a cock-and-bull story, with digressions upon criticism and madness, digressions upon digressions, and further digressions, which, says the author, serve a book in the way foreign troops serve a state, for they “either subdue the natives or drive them into the most unfruitful corners.” Near Swift’s *Tub*, doubtless lay, in Sterne’s estimation, Dr. John Arbuthnot’s *Memoirs of Martin Scriblerus*, long ago pointed out as having some resemblance to *Tristram Shandy*, in its humorous dissertations on science and mathematics, education, playthings, and the breeching of children. The genius of Pope, who bore a hand in the miscellanies of Scriblerus, Sterne took for granted, like the rest of his generation, easily quoting his proverbial lines. The friendship between the poet and his physician, as depicted

* When *Tristram Shandy* first appeared, a Mr. Brown, of Geneva, wrote out a fanciful sketch of the author as he imagined him from the book, and sent it on to Hall-Stevenson. Amused as well as flattered by the letter, Sterne replied, saying with reference to a conjecture that he was a reader of Montaigne: “‘For my conning Montaigne as much as my prayer book’—there you are right again,—but mark a second time, I have not said I admire him as much;—tho’ had he been alive, I would certainly have gone twice as far [as you say] to have smoaked a pipe with him, as with Arch-Bishop Laud or his Chaplains (tho’ one of ‘em was my grandfather).”

in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*—the one a satirist and man of letters pestered by friends and foes alike, and the other a faithful counsellor crying “Hold! for God’s sake you’ll offend”—struck Sterne’s fancy especially, for he carried the situation over into *Tristram Shandy* for his Yorick and Eugenius. Finally, he never doubted the truth of Pope’s doctrine of ruling passions, in accordance with which were constructed all of his own characters.

Sterne also dipped into the scribbling undercurrent of the Queen Anne wits for occasional refreshment. There he discovered Tom Brown “of facetious memory,” one of whose anecdotes was turned to a new purpose in the opening paragraph of *Tristram Shandy*; and there he caught sight of two books as mad as any he himself was destined to write. One of them was *An Essay towards the Theory of the Intelligible World*, from the pen of “Gabriel John,” the pseudonym, perhaps, of Tom D’Urfey, the profane wit and dramatist. It appeared, according to the humorous title-page, “in the Year One thousand Seven Hundred &c,” and was to consist “of a Preface, a Postscript and a Little something between.” On one page this “little something between” was reduced to a series of dashes in place of the usual text, with an explanatory note at the left saying, to quote half of it: “The Author very well understands that a good sizable *Hiatus* discovers a very great Genius, there being no Wit in the World more Ideal, and consequently more refined, than what is display’d in these elaborate Pages, that have ne’re a syllable written on them.” The other mad book, the work of John Dunton, a London bookseller and adventurer, bears the title of *A Voyage Round the World, . . . containing the Rare Adventures of Don Kainophilus* (1691). To attract the reader, Dunton employed every sort of type, including whole pages of capitals and black letter, sprinkled with dashes and index-hands. He began his tale with the prenatal history of his hero, and then ran off into a series of cock-rambles which end nowhere, in order that “people shou’d miss what they expected and find what they never lookt for.” When Sterne was charged with plagiarizing from Dunton, he wrote to a friend to say that he once met with the book in a London circulating library and took from

it "many of his ideas." The very copy of Dunton that Sterne read now rests, it is probable, in the Boston Public Library.*

Not the least charm for Sterne about the old humorists which fell in his way was the quaint erudition that went hand in hand with their frank foolery. After the fashion of the Renaissance, they took all knowledge for their province. Rabelais was a learned physician and Benedictine. Bouchet could not discourse on the virtues of wine without giving first a history of the symposium from the Greeks down through the *amica convivia* of the Romans to the drinking clubs of his own day, embellished throughout with numerous quotations from the ancient poets and historians. Béroalde passed in review the arts and sciences of the time, ridiculing in his progress mathematics, metaphysics, casuistry, and current literature; and setting up the claim that the *Moyen de Parvenir* was "the centre of all books," wherein one might find clearly demonstrated "the reason for all things that have been or ever shall be."

Even Dunton's absurd book bore as sub-title *A Pocket Library*; and Arbuthnot—to pass by the better known Swift—ran through, in burlesque, all the arts and sciences, back to their origin among the monkeys of India and Ethiopia, who were our first philosophers. Erudition like this, real or pretended, Sterne greatly enjoyed. It is sometimes said that our classics, ancient and modern, are over-edited; that the author is submerged in the annotations. Sterne, on the other hand, never finding any fault with learning of this kind, disregarded, as we all well might, the author and bent his mind upon understanding the editor. A good instance of this is his apparent perusal of *Hudibras*, with "large annotations" by the

* This copy was owned by the late James Crossley, an English antiquarian, and after the dispersion of his library in 1885, it found its way into the Boston Public Library (February, 1886). On a fly-leaf, Crossley wrote: "Rodd [Thomas Rodd, the London book-seller] once showed me an original Letter of Sterne in which he mentions this Work, from which he took many of his Ideas and which he had met with in a London Circulating Library. As the present Copy came from Hookham's, whose Bookplate, which was on the original boards, I have pasted opposite, there is little doubt that this was the identical copy read by Sterne." As Hookham's Library was at 15 Old Bond Street, near Sterne's London lodgings, there is good ground for the conjecture with which Crossley closes his valuable note.

Rev. Zachary Grey, a Cambridge man, among the multitude of which he may have found all that had ever been said about the *homunculus*. A better instance is his use of *Philostratus concerning the Life of Apollonius Tyaneus, with . . . Notes upon Each Chapter*, by Charles Blount, the deist. One may imagine Sterne's delight as his eye fell upon Blount's preface to the reader: "Whether kind or unkind, I shall call you neither, for fear lest I be mistaken. . . . As for my *Illustrations*: Notwithstanding they have some coherence with my Text, yet I likewise design'd them as *Philological Essays* upon several Subjects, such as the least hint might present me with." True to his promise, Blount made the old spiritual romance of Philostratus merely the occasion for learned essays, far exceeding in extent the original Greek, on dress, whiskers, swearing, death, *et cetera*, themes which Sterne did not forget, as every reader of him knows, when he came to write *Tristram Shandy*.

Sterne spent some time on Erasmus—on the *Colloquia* and especially on the *Μωρίας ἐγκώμιον*, which had been done into English under the title of *Moriæ Encomium; or a Panegyrick upon Folly*. Erasmus, like Sterne after him, assumed the character of a jester, "playing at pushpin," or "riding astride on a hobby-horse," in his journey through a censure of men and morals. The *Encomium* was adorned "with above fifty curious cuts" by Holbein, of which two would attract Sterne above all others—one representing a fierce wrangle of disputants, and another depicting the instigation of the devil by means of grotesque imps hovering over the head and clawing the hair of their unfortunate victim. From Erasmus, Sterne passed on to the casuists and schoolmen, where he was amused by discourses on the space occupied by souls, the size of hell, debates on "the point of Martin Luther's damnation," "the pudder and racket in Councils about οὐσίᾳ and ὑπόστασις,—and in the Schools of the learned about power and about spirit,—about essences, and about quintessences,—about substances, and about space." In the course of this reading, he fell in with the *ars magna* of Raymond Lully; the terrible anathemas of Ernulf, Bishop of Rochester in the twelfth century; the *De Legibus Hebræorum Ritualibus* of Dr. John Spencer, Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, wherein he stopped on the learned

reasons for and against circumcision; and Sir Robert Brook's *Graunde Abridgement*, with other works in ecclesiastical law, which tried to explain to him that in certain nice cases, as in that of the Duchess of Suffolk, "the mother is not of kin to her child."

Beyond a doubt Sterne saw the *Utrius Cosmi, Maioris scilicet et Minoris Metaphysica, Physica atque Technica Historia* by Robert Flud, a Fellow of the College of Physicians at Oxford, and the first of the English Rosicrucians. The old folio had two dedications, one to the Almighty and the other to James the First. In the first chapter, Flud described, after Trismegistus and Moses, chaos—or the *ens primordiale infinitum, informe*, as his Latin has it,—under the form of a very black smoke or vapor; and for the assistance of the reader's imagination, he covered two thirds of a page with a black square, writing on each of its four sides *Et sic infinitum*, lest somebody might suppose that there were boundaries to the horrible shadow of undigested matter out of which the Almighty created his universe of worlds and stars. This square became of course Sterne's page dressed in mourning for the death of "poor Yorick."

Bacon's essays, we may be sure, were in Sterne's library, for he quoted from them and modified their phrasing with the greatest ease. He also possessed a copy of *Baconiana, or Genuine Remains of Francis Bacon*, a collection of posthumous miscellanies, which had been brought out anonymously by Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury. One of the strange features of this book was the archbishop's "Discourse by way of Introduction," added as a tag at the end of the volume. Sterne was reading the misplaced introduction when he began *Tristram Shandy*, for he "conveyed" a passage from it to his twelfth chapter, and not unlikely derived from the archbishop the notion of inserting his prefaces and dedications midway in his own book. If an introduction may be put after the word *finis*, when all is supposed to be over, why, Sterne would argue, may it not be slipped in anywhere?

The scholar that most fascinated Sterne was Robert Burton, the Oxford recluse who wrote *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, "the only book," said Boswell of Dr. Johnson, "that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to

rise." Once under the spell of the *Anatomy*, there is no release for any man, whether he be of the staid character of Johnson or of the shifting temper of Sterne. "I have lived," wrote its author, to compress an autobiographic passage, "a silent, sedentary, solitary, private life in the university, penned up most part in my study. Though by my profession a Divine, yet out of a running wit, an unconstant, unsettled mind, I had a great desire to have some smattering in all learning, to be *aliquis in omnibus, nullus in singulis*, to roam abroad, to have an oar in every man's boat, to taste of every dish, sip of every cup." An earlier selfhood he discovered in Democritus, the ancient Greek sage of Abdera, "a little wearish old man, very melancholy by nature," who passed his time in his garden, writing under a shady bower, or cutting up divers creatures "to find out the seat of this *atra bilis*, or melancholy, whence it proceeds, and how it is engendered in men's bodies; . . . saving that he sometimes would walk down to the haven and laugh heartily at such variety of ridiculous objects, which there he saw." Since the treatise of the Greek philosopher, if ever written, was no longer in existence, Burton took up the subject anew to the intent that he might cure himself and the world of a dreadful malady. "I writ of melancholy," he said, "by being busy to avoid melancholy." Through "partitions, sections, members, and subsections," entangled with medicine, law, morals, and divinity, he cut out his theme, strewing his course with thousands of quotations, ancient and modern, sometimes inserted in the text, sometimes printed on the margin, neatly paraphrased, or left untranslated, *per accidens* or as it might happen.

The Anatomy of Melancholy, with its curious wit and learning, was the most useful volume in Sterne's library. If Sterne wished a Latin phrase to point a sentence, if he wished a good story, never stale if rightly retold, for an episode in *Tristram Shandy*, he had but to open Burton, and there it lay before him. Without scruple, he transferred to his own pages long stretches of the old book, with only such changes as genius cannot help making when it takes from others.

Besides the *Anatomy*, Sterne read all sorts of books on physiology and medicine. His list of physicians, from whom he could quote directly or indirectly, begins with Hippocrates

and comes down through Coglionissimo Borri, who "discovered in the cellulæ of the occipital parts of the cerebellum . . . the principal seat of the reasonable soul," to Dr. James Mackenzie, who argued for the great effects "which the passions and affections of the mind have upon the digestion." An extraordinary source of amusement to Sterne were treatises on midwifery, which was then just becoming a part of the regular practice of physicians. In these books and pamphlets one physician ridiculed and scolded another, holding up to contempt the instruments his opponent invented to bring children safely into the world, and sometimes interspersing his narrative with noisy disputes between the doctor and the midwife who was being displaced by the new science. Celebrated at the time was the angry altercation between Dr. John Burton of York and Dr. William Smellie of Glasgow. Burton's books, now of great rarity, were worth owning even in Sterne's day for their copperplates etched by George Stubbs, the horse-painter. With local as well as distant controversies, Sterne thus kept pace simply for the humor of it.

That Sterne should have also extracted humor out of mechanics and military engineering is the whim of his genius most akin to madness. True, memories of childhood carried him back to life in Irish barracks, but it is doubtful if he had ever seen a town fortified against a siege. His knowledge of the siege of Namur, for example, which plays so large a part in *Tristram Shandy*, was derived mostly from *The Life of William the Third, Late King of England*, an anonymous military biography that appeared the year after his Majesty's death. It may have been Sterne or it may have been Hall-Stevenson who purchased every book he came across on military science; but it was Sterne who perused them. These treatises on the art of war had an immense run in the century before Sterne, when military engineers brought to the construction of defences, and all that pertains thereto, the assistance of the newer mathematics, like Napier's *Logarithms* and Gunter's *Sines and Tangents*, which performed wonderful feats merely by addition and subtraction, without the help of multiplication and division. Just as with the old romances of chivalry, one Amadis begat another in an endless progeny down through Esplandian, Florisando, and Palmerin; so it

was with the books on military engineering, which in one language or another spread throughout western Europe. Inasmuch as their elaborate calculations fill and occupy the mind beyond all other studies, the author of the *Anatomy* recommended them among the best antidotes against melancholy.

The way in which Sterne entered upon their track, losing himself soon in the mazes, is reflected, I daresay, in what is said of my uncle Toby's reading in *Tristram Shandy*. Most of the first year my uncle Toby pored over "Gobesius's military architecture and pyroballylogy, translated from the Flemish"—presumably, Leonhard Gorecius's *Descriptio Belli Ivoniae* (1578),—that he might discourse learnedly on the uses of artillery. After this close preliminary study, he was able to read rapidly the next year ten or twelve other crabbed authors, just as the schoolboy, after going through his first book in Latin, is supposed to proceed easily with the rest. To take them chronologically, first came Girolamo Cataneo, whose *Libro di Fortificare, Offendere e Diffendere* (1564) contains "brief tables to know readily how many ranks of footmen etc. go to making a just battle"; Agostino Ramelli, with *Le Diverse ed Artificiose Machine* (1588), descriptive of various contrivances for lifting heavy loads, constructing bridges, and hurling ignited grenades and other artificial fires; and the Florentine Lorini, who published a book on fortifications in 1609, and served with honor under the kings of France and Spain. So much for Italy.

Then followed Marolois, whose *Fortification ou Architecture Militaire* (1615) told Sterne how to attack and how to defend, with many mathematical details and more than a hundred plates, including one of Ostend prepared to endure the most protracted siege; the *Nouvelle Manière de Fortification* (1618) by means of sluices, written by Stevinus, a distinguished Dutch mathematician and engineer of the dykes, within whose book Yorick's sermon on conscience long lay concealed; *Les Fortifications* (1629) of the Chevalier de Ville, who attacked Artois under the eyes of Louis the Thirteenth, and was the first, it is said, to write upon the construction and effects of mines; the *Traité des Fortifications* (1645) by the Comte de Pagan, who conducted the sieges of Caen, Montauban, and Nancy, losing an eye and finally his sight

completely in the service of his king; and François Blondel, who constructed great public buildings, arches of triumph, and published among other books *L'Art de jettter les Bombes* (1685). The long list for the second year closes with the *Nouvelle Manière de Fortifier les Places* (1702) by Baron Van Coehoorn, the great Dutch engineer who fortified Namur—where my uncle Toby received his grievous wound,—and gallantly defended the citadel until, himself wounded and his regiment cut to pieces, he was obliged to capitulate to his still greater rival, Prestre de Vauban, afterwards Marshal of France. This was the Vauban who designed new fortifications for most of the cities of France and directed fifty sieges, winning town after town in the Netherlands, with Louis the Fourteenth often standing by, as at Namur, to witness the final blows that compelled the surrender. The methods by which Vauban built and by which he won, Sterne found explained in *De l'Attaque et de la Défense des Places* (1737-42).

Notwithstanding his reading in all these books, Sterne—if we may follow the hints from my uncle Toby—had not yet learned much about projectiles. For this knowledge he went to Tartaglia's *Quesiti ed Invenzioni Diverse* (1546), where he was met with the demonstration that a cannon-ball does not do its mischief by moving in a straight line. Having discovered the road along which a cannon-ball cannot go, he set out to discover next the road in which it must go. His search began with the *Pratique de la Guerre* (1650) of François Malthus, who gave precise directions for the use of artillery, bombs, and mortars; and the search ended with Galileo and Torricelli, whose infallible laws of the parabola he could not understand. There Sterne stopped, hopelessly bewildered. In the strange journey he had consulted now and then the *Acta Eruditorum*, a long and learned series of year-books in Latin, containing the latest discussions and discoveries in medicine, theology, and jurisprudence, as well as in mechanics and military architecture.

From this array of books, no one should infer that Sterne was a man of erudition. He probably could not follow a demonstration in mechanics involving the higher mathematics. It is, for example, noteworthy that he showed no interest in Stevinus's solution of the problem of the inclined plane, the

achievement that gives the Dutch mathematician his place in the history of mechanics. As if ignorant of the brilliant discovery, Sterne referred to Stevinus as the inventor of "a sailing chariot . . . of wonderful contrivance and velocity," belonging to Prince Maurice, for a sight of which "the learned Peireskius . . . walked a matter of five-hundred miles." The truth seems to be that, while designing *Tristram Shandy* during the last years at Sutton, Sterne thumbed many old quartos and folios, amusing himself with maps, plates, and descriptions of sieges, to the end that my uncle Toby might be proficient in the phrases of military science. In that aim Sterne certainly succeeded; for he wrote, with the ease of an expert, of scarp and counter-scarp, counter-guard and demi-bastion, covered-way, glacis, ravelin and half-moon, on through saps, mines, and palisadoes.

The books that have been enumerated by no means comprise all that Sterne read at Sutton. They are rather only the curiosities; but as such they are the most significant, for they show wherein Sterne fed his humor. He continued to quote from the ancient classics, which he had read at school and college, as if they were still his companions. To describe his impatient moods he cited Hotspur when "pestered with a pop-injay"; and the name which he bears in letters was taken from the jester whom Hamlet once knew. He read Lord Rochester, Dryden, and others of the Restoration; and with the wits of the next half century he was still more familiar. Voltaire's *Candide*, Johnson's *Rasselas*, and other notable books he read as they came out, or saw them in the stalls of York dealers. But it is unnecessary to proceed with these miscellanies, since here is already, in Dryden's phrase, God's plenty. As a divine, Sterne knew well the religious literature that was expected of him. It is a pleasure to discover in him traces of Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* and of Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*. For forming his style as a preacher he studied the sermons of Hall, Berkeley, Young, Tillotson, and other moralists and divines, from whom he drew liberally, sometimes merely paraphrasing the original when the harvest season, it may be, gave him scant time for independent composition. Nor should we forget the Scriptures which he read and re-read during the long winter evenings at Sutton, with

the result that his style became saturated with the words and phrases of the English version. Many a clergyman since his time has run through indexes and concordances to the Bible in quest of "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb"; but the labor has been in vain, for the sentence, possessing the beauty and melody of inspiration, is Sterne's own recoinage of a crude proverb.

Along with his reading, Sterne played with his pen occasionally as well as with his pencil and his gun. Between the paragraph-writing for the newspapers and *Tristram Shandy*, lay several whims in verse and prose, including a satirical pamphlet which was duly printed at York. One of these minor pieces—a very pretty fancy cast in the form of a letter to a Mr. Cook,—after remaining in manuscript for more than a century, was published in 1870 by Paul Stapfer in his study of Sterne.* How the French critic came by it we will leave to his own strange narrative:

"Two years ago, a friend of mine in England, an M.A. of the University of Oxford and then Vice-Principal of Elizabeth College in the island of Guernsey, was visiting a lady of his acquaintance at York. Among other things the conversation turned to autographs; whereupon the lady said she had an entire essay in the hand of Sterne, which had never been published; and she showed it to him. M. . . . , after examining it, said:

"I shall soon see a friend who is now at work on a study of Sterne; I am sure that he would be glad to have this piece; but I should not like to show it to him unless he may be permitted to copy and publish it." 'You shall have it,' replied the lady.

"I received the manuscript, copied and returned it. Some time afterwards I met the owner of it and naturally asked her how a precious manuscript like this came into her possession. The very vague information which she gave me in the course of the conversation left only the most confused impression on my mind. For this reason I intended later to ask her to write a short note upon the history of these sheets: but I learned that she was then so ill as to render impossible all correspondence. I was thus compelled to forego any exact knowl-

* *Laurence Sterne, sa Personne et ses Ouvrages* (Paris, 1870).

edge of the matter, and even a second perusal of the manuscript which she had offered to place at my disposal again that I might make a facsimile of it."

"We have then," adds Stapfer in comment upon the story, "no external proof of the authenticity of the fragment. All we can say is that the hand, remarkably fair and firm, is identical with what we have already seen of Sterne's; but there is no signature."

It would be quite easy to set up an argument against accepting as Sterne's this late discovery. Those who know Sterne only from *Tristram Shandy* may say that it hardly resembles anything in that book. Those who know Sterne a little better may say that it is only one among the scores of imitations and forgeries that followed in the wake of his popularity. And to everybody the tale told by the lady of York, so far as there is any, must seem a fabrication. But other manuscripts, Sterne's beyond doubt, have drifted down in the same obscure ways; and the content of the one in question is in perfect harmony with an allegorical phase of mind through which Sterne was passing in the first years with his books at Sutton. In this case the allegory ends with a moral reflection, playfully supported by a line from Pope's *Essay on Man*, occurring in the first epistle near the passage which Sterne quoted in a letter to Miss Lumley, back in 1740. The spelling and abbreviations, as printed by Stapfer, correspond with Sterne's peculiar usage; an apt phrase recalls now and then his fine sense for style; and the background is Sutton without much doubt.

The interesting trifle—only half worked out—is a dream or meditation. The Vicar of Sutton had spent, I should say, an evening in his library over Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes*, in its day a famous book on the vast number of new worlds discovered or made probable by modern science. "A leaf on a tree growing in the garden," said Fontenelle, "is a little world inhabited by innumerable animalcules invisible to the naked eye, to whom it appears as an immense expanse with mountains and ravines. Those on one side have no intercourse with those who live on the other, any more than we have with men at the antipodes. Just so, it seems to me, the great planets moving through the immensity of space may be likewise inhabited with beings." The dwellers

upon earth, moralized Sterne with reference to this passage, have commonly regarded themselves as the centre of the universe. "So considerable do they imagine themselves as doubtless to hold that all these numerous stars (our sun among the rest) were created with the only view of twinkling upon such of them, as have occasion to follow their cattle late at night." Whereas the truth seems to be that "we are situate on a kind of isthmus, which separates two infinitys," one revealed by the telescope and the other by the microscope. "On one side infinite power and wisdom appear drawn at *full extent*; on the other, in *miniature*. The infinitely *strong and bold strokes there*, the infinitely *nice and delicate touches here*, shew equally in both the divine hand."

His mind under the sway of these speculations, the vicar laid aside his book, strolled out into his orchard, and stopped near one of those plum trees which he had planted on first coming to Sutton. It was a brilliant summer night without a cloud. As he stood there, Fontenelle's myriad worlds were all about him. Far above were the moon and the countless stars. By his side, on each green leaf of his plum trees were nations performing "actions as truly great as any we read of in the history of Alexander. Their courage, resolution, and patience of pain may be as great as that exhibited by the Macedonian army, nay and even the prize of the contest no way inferior to that which animated the brave Greeks. The possession or conquest of the leaf may gratify as many and as strong desires in them, as that of the earth in us."

Time and space, Sterne further reflected, are but relative notions depending upon the size and shape of the brain. To the beings that people the universe comprised within his plum tree, an hour or a minute may seem as long as four score and ten years to us. On the tricks that time and place may play with us, there came to Sterne's mind, "a very fine Spectator,"* wherein is related a story of Mahomet from the Koran. "The angel Gabriel," according to Addison, "took Mahomet out of his bed one morning to give him a sight of all things in the seven heavens, in paradise, and in hell, which the prophet took a distinct view of; and after having held ninety thousand conferences with God, was brought back again to his bed. All

* No. 94.

this, says the Alcoran, was transacted in so small a space of time, that Mahomet at his return found his bed still warm, and took up an earthen pitcher, which was thrown down at the very instant that the angel Gabriel carried him away, before the water was all spilt."

At this point in his reverie, Sterne returned to the rectory and went to bed. "From that time," runs the narrative, "I knew not what happen'd to me, till by degrees I found myself in a new state of being, without any remembrance or suspicion that I had ever existed before, growing up gradually to reason and manhood, as I had done here. The world I was in was vast and commodious. The heavens were enlighten'd with abundance of smaller luminarys resembling stars, and one glaring one resembling the moon; but with this difference that they seem'd fix'd in the heavens, and had no apparent motion. There were also a set of luminarys of a different nature, that gave a dimmer light. They were of various magnitudes, and appear'd in different forms. Some had the form of crescents; others, that shone opposite to the great light, appear'd round. We call'd them by a name, which in our language would sound like second stars. Besides these, there were several luminous streaks running across the heavens like our milky way; and many variable glimmerings like our north-lights." In his new world the dreamer passed several ages and then seemed to return to earth, where he was first rallied and then persecuted for his astronomical opinions. In process of time "began to be heard all over the world a huge noise and fragor in the skys, as if all nature was approaching to her dissolution. The stars seem'd to be torn from their orbits, and to wander at random thro' the heavens. . . . all was consternation, horrour, and amaze; no less was expected than an universal wreck of nature. What ensu'd I know not. All of a sudden, I knew not how, I found myself in bed, as just waking from a sound sleep. . . . I hurri'd into the orchard, and by a sort of natural instinct made to the plumb-tree under which pass'd my last night's reverie. I observ'd the face of the heavens was just the same as it had appear'd to me immediately before I left my former state; and that a brisk gale of wind, which is common about sun rising, was abroad. I recollect a hint I had read in *Fontenelle* who intimates that there is reason to suppose that

the *Blue on Plumbs* is no other than an immense number of living creatures. I got into the tree, examin'd the clusters of plumbs; found that they hung in the same position, and made the same appearance with the constellations of second stars, I had been so familiarly acquainted with, excepting that some few were wanting, which I myself had seen fall. I cou'd then no longer doubt how the matter was."

The world to which the dreamer had been transported by the angel Gabriel for some thousands of years was, it would seem, none other than the blue surface of a luscious plum growing on his favorite tree. The luminaries that shone about him like "second stars" were other plums dangling above him. The "luminous streaks running across the heavens like our milky way" were branches of the plum tree, and "the many variable glimmerings like our north-lights" were the leaves playing in the moonbeams. The damage to Sterne's solar system had been caused by a wind that here and there sent a plum to the ground.

The dream is neatly rounded with a moral and a prophecy: "O the vanity of worldly things, and even of worlds themselves! O world, wherein I have spent so many happy days! O the comforts, and enjoyments I am separated from; the acquaintance and friends I have left behind me there! O the mountains, rivers, rocks and plains, which ages had familiariz'd to my view! with you I seem'd at home; here I am like a banish'd man; every thing appears strange, wild and savage! O the projects I had form'd! the designs I had set on foot, the friendships I had cultivated! How has one blast of wind dash'd you to pieces! . . . But thus it is: *Plumbs* fall, and *Planets* shall perish. . . .

"'And now a Bubble burst, and now a world.' The time will come when the powers of heaven shall be shaken, and the stars shall fall like the fruit of a tree, when it is shaken by a mighty wind!"

Akin to this fancy addressed to Mr. Cook is a meditation in verse called *The Unknown World*, with the explanatory title: "Verses occasion'd by hearing a Pass-Bell," that is, the knell for the death of some parishioner at Sutton or some citizen of York. The poem, perhaps copied from a newspaper, appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July, 1743, as

by "the Rev. Mr. St—n," and with a quotation for its motto from John Hughes's *Siege of Damascus*: "But what's beyond Death? Who shall draw that Veil?" Sterne liked the verses so well that he took the manuscript with him to Coxwold, where it was carefully guarded by his successors for a century; one of whom—the Rev. George Scott—permitted Thomas Gill of Easingwold to print it in his *Vallis Eboracensis* (1852), a book on the history and antiquities of the York valley. Spirited away from Coxwold, the manuscript is now possessed, it is said, by a member of the Scott family. Though quite original in its details, the poem bears some analogies to the Emperor Hadrian's famous address to his departing soul as translated by Pope and afterwards elaborated by the poet in *The Dying Christian to his Soul*. The abbreviations of the manuscript and the use of *y* for *th*, reproduced here, are a little puzzling at first sight; and quaint obscurity is lent to the diction by astronomical and other symbols* which had come under Sterne's eye in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and perhaps in one of Pope's minor satires. Taken in order, the symbols ☽, ☾, ☿, and ☾ stand for the world, God, heaven, and the soul:

Hark^e my gay Fr^d y^t solemn Toll
 Speaks y^e departure of a soul;
 'Tis gone, y^{ts} all we know—not where
 Or how y^e unbody'd soul do's fare—
 In that mysterious ☽ none knows,
 But ☾ alone to w^m it goes;
 To whom departed souls return
 To take th^{ir} Doom to smile or mourn.
 Oh! by w^t glimm'ring light we view
 The unknown ☽ we're hast'ning to!
 God has lock'd up y^e mystic Page,
 And curtain'd darkness round y^e stage!
 Wise ☿ to render search perplext
 Has drawn 'twixt y^s ☽ & y^e next
 A dark impenetrable screen
 All behind w^{ch} is yet unseen!

* The abbreviations and symbols of the manuscript, which do not appear in the poem as originally printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and elsewhere, were retained by Gill.

We talk of \wp , we talk of Hell,
 But w^t yy* mean no tongue can tell!
 Heaven is y^e realm where angels are
 And Hell y^e chaos of despair.
 But w^t y^{ese} awful truths imply,
 None of us know before we die!
 Wheth^{er} we will or no, we must
 Take y^e succeeding \odot on trust.

This hour perhaps o^r Frrd is well,
 Death-struck, y^e next he cries, Farewell!
 I die! and y^{et} for ought we see,
 Ceases at once to breath & be———
 Thu^s launch'd f^m life's ambiguous shore
 Ingulph'd in Death appears no more,
 Then undirected to repair,
 To distant \odot ^s we know not where.
 Swift flies the \wp , perhaps 'tis gone
 A thousand leagues beyond y^e sun;
 Or 2^{ce} 10 thousand more 3^{ce} told
 Ere y^e forsaken clay is cold!
 And yet who knows if Fr^{nds} we lov'd
 Tho' dead may be so far remov'd;
 Only y^e vail of flesh between,
 Perhaps yy watch us though unseen.
 Whilst we, y^{ir} loss lamenting, say,
 They're out of hearing far away;
 Guardians to us perhaps they're near
 Concealed in Vehicles of air,
 And yet no notices yy give
 Nor tell us where, nor how yy live;
 Tho' conscious whilst with us below,
 How much y^{ms}† desired to know.
 As if bound up by solemn Fate
 To keep y^e secret of y^{ir} state,
 To tell y^{ir} joys or pains to none,
 That man might live by Faith alone.
 Well, let my sovereign, if he please,
 Lock up his marvellous decrees;

* They.

† Themselves.

Why sh^d I wish him to reveal
 W^t he thinks proper to conceal?
 It is enough y^t I believe
 Heaven's bright^r yⁿ I can conceive;
 And he y^t makes it all his care
 To serve God here shall see him there!
 But oh! w^t ⊙^s shall I survey
 The moment y^t I leave y^s clay?
 How sudden y^e surprize, how new!
 Let it, my God, be happy too.

The Unknown World is but one of many poems that Sterne scribbled off for the entertainment of himself and his friends. On his annual visits to Skelton, it was his custom to recite cock-and-bull stories after the type of the one assigned to him in *Crazy Tales*. In collaboration with his host, he composed, it is said, on one of these occasions, the following classical inscription for the front of the reservoir which supplied Skelton Castle with water:

“Leap from thy mossy cavern'd bed,
 Hither thy prattling waters bring,
 Blandusia's Muse shall crown thy head,
 And make thee to a sacred spring.”

In a quite different mood is the ode that Sterne inserted in *Tristram Shandy*, beginning “Harsh and untuneful are the notes of Love,” and suddenly breaking off in the second stanza with “O Julia!” But from these brief poems and numerous facetious and sentimental verses that once floated through newspapers and magazines as Sterne's, one quickly returns to *The Unknown World*. This clever meditation, with its warning to “my gay friend,” and the flight of the soul to a region more than six times ten thousand leagues beyond the sun before the clay which it left became cold, is the best that the Muse could do for Laurence Sterne.

C H A P. VII.

The Good Warm Watch-Coat. 1751-1759

S TERNE'S meditations in verse and prose give us a glimpse of a very sober young man exercising his pen in the moral and devotional themes of a poet and dreamer, quite apart from his prevailing mood. They show wit rather than humor. It is clear that the Vicar of Sutton had not yet picked up the talent which lay nearest to him. Among his friends, as we have drawn his portrait at Stillington Hall and Skelton Castle, he was in no sense a moralist, but a parson who loved a jest above all else. During his last years at Sutton he belonged to a convivial club, composed of several clergymen and substantial citizens of York, who assembled o' nights at Sunton's Coffee-House in Coney Street, fast by the George Inn. Anecdotes were set afloat of what he said and did when chosen president of the evening, but they are too impalpable to find record here. As yet he had published nothing by which his humor could be judged. Now accident brought the occasion and he made the most of it.

Accident indeed brought out the humorist; but in the incidents of his life previous to the event, one may see working a half-conscious plan. As early as the date of the quarrel with his uncle over political paragraphs in the newspapers, Sterne perhaps had a vague notion that he might some day become a writer on his own account; for he then told his friends that he was tired of employing his brains for other people's advantage. Much of his curious reading also looks like special preparation for a literary career; but his farming was for years an encumbrance that impeded him greatly. Fortunately for literature, his land projects had issued in miserable failure. Some months before the awards were made to him under the Sutton Enclosure Act, he resolved to rid himself of unnecessary parish business—land, tithes, and the botheration of all taxes. So he informed, late in the autumn of 1758, the Rev. John Blake in a letter concluding with the paragraph:

“I thank God, I have settled most of my affairs—let my

freehold to a promising tenant——have likewise this week let him the most considerable part of my tyths, and shall clear my hands and head of all county entanglements, having at present only ten pounds a year in land and seven pounds a year in Corn Tyth left undisposed of, which shall be quitted with all prudent speed. This will bring me and mine into a narrow compass, and make us, I hope, both rich and happy.”

And in memory of his sad experiences at Sutton, he wrote, six months before his death, to a certain Sir W—— who was planning to open marl beds upon his estate, to warn him against an undertaking sure to end in disaster. “I was once,” Sterne told him, “such a puppy myself, as to pare, and burn, and had my labour for my pains, and two hundred pounds out of my pocket. Curse on farming (said I), I will try if the pen will not succeed better than the spade. The following up of that affair (I mean farming) made me lose my temper, and a cart load of turnips was (I thought) very dear at two hundred pounds.”

While Sterne was interchanging letters with Blake about his farming, the weather, and parish business, it began to be noised about the coffee-houses that trouble was brewing among the clergy and officials of the cathedral; that the dean, to give a detail or two, had broken a solemn promise; that the dean and the archbishop were at the point of a complete breach, etc. At the heels of these rumors, which were spread far beyond York by country gentlemen who had come in for the election, the quarrel broke forth into a warfare of pamphlets. For the first time since his appointment to Sutton, Sterne was then at full leisure. The contested election of the year was over, his oats were threshed, his barley had been sold to the maltman, and his farm and tithes had been leased to a neighbor for a series of years. As friend and champion of the dean, Sterne entered the broil with rare zest, bringing it to a close in a burst of ridicule and laughter.

The story of this quarrel, which terminated in Sterne’s *Political Romance*—better known by its later title, *The History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat*,—may be pieced together from the several pamphlets that were issued, the *York Courant*, and the local records of the time. Its beginnings go back to intrigues and dissensions immediately after the coming of

Archbishop Hutton and Dean Fountayne. Some account of the fracas has been given in an earlier chapter; it now remains to add those details which concern Sterne and the first display of his humor in print. The story, were it allowable to infuse a little imagination into it, might be made as good reading as any one of Trollope's cathedral tales.

The archbishop, Sterne remarked, "might have had his virtues, but the leading part of his character was not *Humility*." The dean, an old college acquaintance of the humorist, was a colorless, good-natured ecclesiastic, inclined however to insist upon his prerogatives. Neither of these dignitaries resided in York. The archbishop's palace was then, as now, at Bishopthorpe, two or three miles out of the city; and the dean passed most of his time at Melton, his estate in South Yorkshire. Little differences that early sprang up between them were fomented by Dr. Francis Topham, the leading ecclesiastical lawyer at York. Dr. Topham, a year or so older than Sterne, "was descended from an ancient and honourable family of Yorkshire." Bred to the law, he graduated LL.B. at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, in 1734, and received from the same university the degree of LL.D. in 1739. Whether the two men met at Cambridge, it is nowhere said; but they both settled at York at nearly the same time, where Dr. Topham quickly established himself in the favor of those high in the Church. Any office, however small, he was ready to snap up for the increase of his income. He became in course of time, though he did not yet enjoy all these positions, Commissary and Keeper-General of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts of the Archbishop of York, "Official to the Archdeacon of York, Official to the Archdeacon of the East Riding, Official to the Archdeacon of Cleveland, Official to the Precentor, Official to the Chancellor, and Official to several of the prebendaries." He was thus able to lay by, needless to add, a handsome fortune, destined to be squandered by a spendthrift son.

Never satisfied with the offices that he held, Dr. Topham was always manœuvring for more. In the course of a few weeks after Dean Fountayne came to York in the winter of 1747-48, one or more friends of the hungry lawyer recommended him to the dean as a person eminently qualified for

any legal position that might fall directly within the dean's patronage or might be secured for him through the dean's vote and interest in the chapter. It was well known that Dr. Topham had his eye at this time on two ecclesiastico-legal offices that were sure to become vacant very soon; to wit, the Commissaryship of the Peculiar Court of Pickering and Pocklington, which was in the dean's absolute gift, and the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter of York, in the disposition of which the dean's voice, as head of the chapter, was potent above all the rest.

The two offices, valued respectively at six and twenty pounds a year, were then held by Dr. William Ward, who was in feeble health and likely to die at any moment. Subsequent to the application of his friends, Dr. Topham had a formal interview with Dean Fountayne, which resulted in a general promise of the first office and of the dean's aid in obtaining the other. But Dr. Ward did not die so soon as was expected; and in the meantime the dean became less favorably impressed with Dr. Topham's character. A plan was devised whereby Dr. Ward should remain in nominal possession of the two commissaryships, while the fees should go to Dr. Mark Braithwaite, an advocate in the ecclesiastical court, a poor but estimable man, who felt unable to incur the legal expense incidental to the issue of new patents to the offices in question. To this arrangement Dr. Topham agreed with great reluctance and only, it was his claim, on the assurance that the positions should fall to himself on the death of Dr. Braithwaite, who, though in fairly good health, was of a delicate constitution as well as somewhat advanced in age. The dean, however, did not understand it that way; he thought himself rid of Dr. Topham and all further solicitations from him or his friends. But he was unacquainted with the resources of the man he had to deal with. Dr. Topham, as the legal adviser to Archbishop Hutton, watched closely the conduct of the dean, and on every opportunity for creating friction between them, despatched mischievous messages to his client when in London or wherever else his Grace might be. In the autumn of 1748, a dispute arose over the appointment of preachers in the cathedral. The dean, it was averred, ordered the pulpit locked against a prebendary chosen for the day by the chancellor. The dispute

lingered on through the following winter. As a reward for his able defence of the archbishop's rights on this and other occasions, Dr. Topham was appointed, on June 28, 1751, Commissary and Keeper-General of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts of the Archbishop of York, the most comfortable office of all in the long list before enumerated.

In the meantime, so uncertain is human life, Dr. Braithwaite had died; and in June, 1751, the feeble Dr. Ward, who had strangely outlived him by nearly a year,* followed in his footsteps, leaving vacant the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter and that of the Peculiar Court of Pickering and Pocklington. Dr. Topham made a grasp for both of them, notwithstanding the lucrative office he had just received. A majority of the chapter, he thought, were for his appointment to the first position. But the dean brought up the matter, it was alleged, when the lawyer's friends were absent, and threw his influence in favor of William Stables, Bachelor of Laws, who was easily elected on the first of August. Dr. Topham's charge that the chapter was made up against him was indeed true, for there were present on that day only his enemies: the dean, the canons residentiary—Charles Cowper and William Berdmore—and Laurence Sterne. In spite of this rebuff, Dr. Topham felt so certain of the second position that he had the patent for it made out, with his name written in ready for the dean's seal. The dean, however, gave the one legal office then in his sole gift to his friend Laurence Sterne, who had just written an eloquent sermon for him in Latin for the Cambridge Commencement. It was an amusing *quid pro quo*. The appointment, of which no record is discoverable, was probably made within a week or two after the election of William Stables to the other position.

Dr. Topham raised a loud clamor over this shameless betrayal of his hopes. It was everywhere given out by him and his friends that the dean had promised him two patents and had afterwards broken his word. This grave charge the dean let pass until he came to York again, a few months later, to preside over "a public Sessions Dinner" held at the residence of George Woodhouse, a wine-merchant of the parish of St. Michael-le-Belfrey. There were present the usual company of

* *York Courant*, August 21, 1750, and July 2, 1751.

prebendaries and other officials of the chapter, Dr. Topham, and one or more country gentlemen. Knowing that an extraordinary scene might occur at the dinner, Sterne, always glad of a quarrel, rode in from Sutton. As soon as the plates were removed, the dean, turning to Sir Edmund Anderson of Kilnwick, openly accused Dr. Topham of spreading abroad false reports to the harm and discredit of the dean and chapter.

It is true, the dean admitted, that I once promised Dr. Topham my own Commissaryship of Pickering and Pocklington; but he subsequently renounced all claim to it in favor of Dr. Braithwaite. When it became vacant by the death of Dr. Braithwaite and Dr. Ward (in whose name the patent had remained), I looked upon myself as clearly and fully at liberty to dispose of it as I pleased, certainly without consulting Dr. Topham. As to the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter, it was not, as you all know, mine to give and I am not accustomed to promise what is not my own. Dr. Topham's affair is not with me but with the chapter in which my vote is only one among thirty.

After a general statement of facts in this tenor—though not in these words precisely, for we have only a few phrases to go by,—the dean faced Dr. Topham and demanded an explanation of his conduct. “Dr. Topham,” to quote Sterne’s attested account of what took place, “at first disowned his being the Author of such a Story to the Dean’s Disadvantage; but being pressed by Mr. Sterne, then present, with an undeniable Proof, That he, Dr. *Topham*, did propagate the said Story, Dr. *Topham* did, at last, acknowledge it; adding, as his Reason or Excuse for so doing, That he apprehended (or words to that Effect) he had a Promise, under the Dean’s own Hand, of the *Dean and Chapter’s Commissaryship*.” The dean then called upon “Dr. *Topham* to produce the Letter in which such pretended Promise was made.” Dr. Topham replied that he had not brought the letter with him, or something like that. Whereupon the dean read to the company a letter that Dr. Topham had written to him while at Cambridge for his Doctor’s degree in June, 1751, requesting the two commissaryships in succession to Dr. Ward. Then he took from his pocket and read a copy of his own curt reply, dated at Cambridge, July 2, 1751, in which the application was ignored or merely alluded

to in the postscript: "I hope very soon to see you at York." Both letters were acknowledged as genuine by the crestfallen lawyer.

Only a little imagination is necessary on the part of the reader to construct out of this legal phraseology a hot encounter, as Mr. Sterne and the dean one after the other rise to their feet, shaking forefinger or fist over Dr. Topham and proving him a scoundrel. The way in which they silenced their enemy redounds, it must be admitted, not so much to their sense of justice as to their skill and adroitness. Three years before this, the dean had certainly promised the lawyer his own patent and his aid in obtaining the one in the joint gift of himself and the chapter. He had simply changed his mind. He had not foreseen his need of an oration in the style of Cicero from the pen of Laurence Sterne.

Dr. Topham, publicly set down a liar, kept quiet for several years, so far as there is any record of it; but he was only waiting for a good opportunity to return to the attack. In the spring of 1757, Archbishop Hutton was appointed to the see of Canterbury. His successor at York was Dr. John Gilbert, for some years Bishop of Salisbury. At best a man of mediocre talent and character, the new archbishop counted for little in the diocese of York, owing to the many physical infirmities that were coming upon him. He languished rather than lived at Bishopthorpe. Dr. Topham was a frequent visitor at the palace, making it his "Business to inquire after every Place and Remedy that might help his Grace in his Complaints." When the archbishop was too ill to see him, the interviews and correspondence were carried on between Dr. Topham and the archbishop's daughter,* who acted as secretary and adviser to her father in diocesan and other matters. On first meeting the new archbishop, Dr. Topham told him "That he would find it very difficult, if not impossible, to live upon good Terms with his Dean and Chapter," for they were "A Set of *strange* People." The archbishop was however assured by Dr. Topham that it was his policy on all questions of dispute to espouse "the Interests of the See of York, in Opposition to those of the Deanery." The foundations were thus carefully laid for a fresh quarrel, which first arose from a trivial incident.

* Emma Gilbert, afterwards the Countess of Edgcumbe.

In September, 1757, the archbishop issued, on the advice of Dr. Topham, a mandate for the *immediate* induction of the archbishop's brother into a prebend to which he had been appointed. This was an unusual proceeding, inasmuch as a delay of three days was customary between the reception of a mandate and an induction. But the case was urgent. The sick archbishop had just had a serious relapse when for the moment his life was despaired of; and should he die before the installation of his prebendary, the title, it was pointed out, would instantly accrue to the Crown. The chancellor of the diocese, after consulting with the residentiaries, decided to let the induction take the ordinary course. The dean, though he could have known nothing of the incident at the time, being absent at Melton, was nevertheless held responsible for "the dilatory *Capitular Forms* and Ceremonies of the Church of York." Another point of dispute was over leases. Dr. Topham set up the claim that when the archbishop sends a lease to the dean and chapter, "the *Seal* of the *Corporation* ought to be put to it, upon its receiving the *Assent* and *Consent* of a *Majority* of the Body Corporate," by the general proxy which the dean was accustomed to leave with the chapter for unimportant matters. On the other hand, it was the dean's opinion that the seal ought not to be put to a lease without "a special proxy" from himself. Dr. Topham called the dean's attention to the statute of the thirty-third year of Henry the Eighth against this and other favorite negative powers of deans. The dean replied that he had never regarded a special proxy as quite essential in the case of leases, but that Dr. Topham had always insisted upon one whenever his own interests were involved.

It was not the intent of Dr. Topham, if we read him aright, to force these differences to a breach between the dean and the archbishop. He was simply ingratiating himself into special favor at the palace so that the archbishop might be kindly disposed to a new and questionable scheme on which his heart was now set. Back in 1751 the lawyer had been blessed by the birth of a son, that Edward Topham, playwright and libertine, who lived to bring into fashion short scarlet coats, short white waistcoats, and long leather breeches reaching well upwards to the chin, at a time when everybody had been wearing very long coats, very long waistcoats, but

breeches very short in the waist, and thus very troublesome to aldermen and all other modest men of conspicuous rotundity. "Through life it was a feather in my friend Topham's cap," said Frederic Reynolds, a brother dramatist, "that when a boy, he was the unconscious founder of Sterne's literary career."* For his son, already at his accidence, the fond father wished to make handsome provision. On searching into the records of the dean and chapter, he discovered that the patent of the Commissary of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts—his best paying office—had formerly been granted and enjoyed for two lives instead of for one life, as was then the custom. He naturally wished a revival of the good old times. So he went to the archbishop in the summer of 1758, and asked him for permission to open his patent of the office, which read for one life only, and "to add the Life of *another proper Person* to it," meaning thereby, as it quickly transpired, the name of his own son.

The archbishop at first readily assented to the plan, out of gratitude to the lawyer for his many services; but in the course of the next few weeks, he began to have doubts about the wisdom of the proposal. The transaction could not be completed, as Dr. Topham well knew, without the concurrence of the dean and chapter, which was, under the circumstances, quite difficult, if not impossible, to obtain, despite the archbishop's wishes. It is unnecessary to go far into the intrigues and flatteries now practised by Dr. Topham to win the friendship of the men whom he had grossly offended. Very amusing, indeed, is a letter that he sent over to Melton, by Mr. John Clough, registrar of the dean and chapter, to urge the dean, as friend and well-wisher, to act favorably in the matter of the patent at once before his elevation to a more exalted station. "As I have," said the message, "very lately had a *private Intimation* of the Bishop of *Winchester* having just had some very alarming Symptoms, I must expect to be *able soon to congratulate* you on your being added to the Bench of Bishops." The dean sent back the following cooling-card:†

* *The Life and Times of Frederic Reynolds written by himself*, II, 190 *et seq.* (London, 1826).

† This letter and all details of the sessions dinner are given in *An*

“Melton, Aug. 14, 1758.

“Sir,

“I received your letter by Mr. *Clough*, and shall take the first opportunity to examine the Registers in our Office relating to the Patents of the Commissary, and also to consult my Brethren at *York*, upon the Affair you mention.

“I flatter myself that the Archbishop will not doubt of my Readiness to comply with any Request his Grace may make to me, being confident that he would not ask me to lend a helping Hand for the depriving his Successors of any of their customary Privileges of the Archbishoprick.”

“I am, Sir,

“Your most obedient
“humble Servant,

“J. Fountayne.”

That the question might be settled once for all, the dean, Dr. Topham, and several others were summoned to meet at Bishopthorpe on the seventh of November for a general conference. The two chief dignitaries, who had been misrepresented, each to each, by the intriguing lawyer, found themselves agreeably of one opinion; that it was inadvisable, notwithstanding ancient precedent, to grant the valuable patent for more than one life. The lawyer, enraged at this decision, says Sterne, “huffed and bounced most terribly,” threatening everybody from the archbishop down to a timid surgeon, one Isaac Newton, who gave the story of the conference to the coffee-houses.

As nothing came of these angry violences, Dr. Topham decided to appeal to the public against the dean, whom he charged with working upon the sick man at Bishopthorpe. So during the second week in December was launched his anonymous pamphlet entitled *A LETTER Address'd to the Reverend the DEAN of York; In which is given A full Detail of some very extraordinary Behaviour of his, in relation to his Denial of a Promise made by him to Dr. TOPHAM*. Though the sixpenny pamphlet set about to deal principally with the commissaryship that fell to Sterne, it nevertheless touched

• *Answer to a Letter addressed to the Dean of York in the Name of Dr. Topham (York, 1758).*

upon all the bickerings of a dozen years. Two weeks later, the dean had ready his retort courteous, which bore the title: *An ANSWER To A LETTER Address'd to the DEAN of YORK, In the NAME of Dr. TOPHAM.* A feature of this very skilful reply was a formal declaration (from which we have quoted), signed by Laurence Sterne and other justices of the peace, as to what took place at the Sessions Dinner at Mr. Woodhouse's. Had he desired, the Vicar of Sutton could not well have kept out of the controversy, for, as Dr. Topham had put it, Sterne's appointment to the courts of Pickering and Pocklington first brought the quarrel to a head. In concluding his open letter, the dean announced that he had taken leave of Dr. Topham "once for all." Thus apparently sure of the last word, the lawyer poured forth the phials of his wrath in *A REPLY TO THE ANSWER TO A LETTER Lately addressed to the DEAN OF YORK.* With considerable humor "a late notable Performance," supposed to be the dean's, was described as "the Child and Offspring of many Parents." Mr. Sterne and some others, it was intimated, had been called in by the dean for "Correcting, Revising, Ornamenting, and Embellishing" his well-known faint and nerveless style.

The attestation and a phrase here and there in the dean's pamphlet were without doubt Sterne's; but they count for nothing in comparison with what Sterne now did. In his retreat at Sutton he had been at work during the last week on his own reply to Dr. Topham. Late in January, 1759, just after Dr. Topham's second pamphlet reached the coffee-houses, Sterne had printed, ready for distribution, *A Political Romance, Addressed TO ——, Esq; OF YORK. To which is subjoined a KEY:*—since re-named *The History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat.* As indicative of his aim, which was ridicule rather than satire or controversy, the title-page bore the motto from Horace:

“Ridiculum acri
Fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat Res.”

The first edition of *A Political Romance* is so exceeding rare that most who have written on Sterne have doubted its being printed during the author's life-time. It was laid by in Sterne's desk, said Percy Fitzgerald and Sidney Lee, and

at most circulated only in manuscript. It was "only posthumously printed," remarked Walter Sichel. This, we now know, was not the case. A copy indeed strayed up to London, where it was reprinted in part in 1769, the year after Sterne's death, by a bookseller in the Strand. The editor corrected the humorist's English, substituting elegant phrases for quaint and homely idioms, and cut away the *Key* and two long letters that go with it—in all, just one half of the romance as originally written and published at York early in 1759. It is this mutilated version only that has been known to readers and biographers of Sterne. Fortunately, however, a copy of the first edition found its way, a half century or more ago, into the splendid collection of Edward Hailstone, Esq., of Horton Hall, Bradford, England, who lent it to Robert Davies, the antiquary, while preparing his *Memoir of the York Press* (1868). On the death of Mr. Hailstone in 1890, it passed with many valuable books and manuscripts to the library of the dean and chapter at York, where it was uncovered in September, 1905. A few weeks afterwards another copy was found in a volume of pamphlets at the York Subscription Library. Still another copy, bound with the previous tracts in the controversy, has long rested, it now turns out, in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. Nowhere was the pamphlet known by the library officials as Sterne's. There are probably a few other copies in existence.

Sterne cast his narrative into the form of an allegory, which becomes easy and delectable when we know the incidents underlying it. In order that things which seem great might appear as small as they really were, the diocese of York was cut down to a country parish, and the archbishop thereby reduced to the rank of a village parson. The dean, shorn of his surname, became merely John the parish clerk; and the cathedral chapter figured as the church wardens. Incidentally Mark Braithwaite appeared as Mark Slender, and William Stables as William Doe. Dr. Topham, renamed Trim, because he received so thorough a trimming at the last, was degraded to sexton and dog-whipper of the parish; and Sterne himself was slightly disguised under the name of Lorry Slim.

The late parson and John the parish clerk, says the tale, had just got snugly settled in the parish, when Trim "put it into

A
Political Romance,
Addressed
To — — — — —, Esq;
O F
Y O R K.

To which is subjoined a
K E Y.

Ridiculum acri
Fortius et melius magnas plerunque secat Res.



Y O R K:
Printed in the Year MDCCLIX.

[Price ONE SHILLING.]

Facsmile of Title Page to "A Political Romance"

the Parson's Head, 'That *John's* Desk in the Church was, at the least, four Inches higher than it should be:—That the Thing gave Offence, and was indecorous, inasmuch as it approach'd too near upon a Level with the Parson's Desk itself.' This Hardship the Parson complained of loudly,—and told *John* one Day after Prayers,—'He could bear it no longer:—And would have it alter'd and brought down as it should be.' *John* made no other Reply, but, 'That the Desk was not of his raising:—That 'twas not one Hair Breadth higher than he found it;—and that as he found it, so would he leave it.' "

This stiff dispute, shadowing forth in allegory the quarrel between Archbishop Hutton and Dr. Fountayne over the key to the cathedral pulpit, was "Trim's harvest." For a few days later *John* saw Trim emerging from the vicarage and "strutting across the Church-yard, y'clad in a good creditable cast Coat, large Hat and Wig, which the Parson had just given him.—'Ho! Ho! Hollo! *John!*' cries *Trim*, in an insolent Bravo, as loud as ever he could bawl—'See here, my Lad! how fine I am.'—"The more Shame for you," answered *John*, seriously.—'Do you think, *Trim*,' says he, 'such Finery, gain'd by such Services, becomes you, or can wear well?'"

This was Sterne's way of saying that Dr. Topham had secured the patent of the Prerogative Courts of York.

"A snapper-up of unconsidered trifles" to deck himself out with, Trim had also been trying for some time to coax from *John* a pair of black plush breeches "not much the worse for wearing." He "begged for God's Sake to have them bestowed upon him when *John* should think fit to cast them." *John* told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself for creating such a racket in the village about "an old-worn-out-Pair-of-cast-Breeches, not worth Half a Crown." "In the first Place," said he in allusion to Dr. Topham's many comfortable places, "are you not Sexton and Dog-Whipper, worth Three Pounds a Year?—Then you begg'd the Church-Wardens to let your Wife have the Washing and Darning of the Surplice and Church-Linen, which brings you in Thirteen Shillings and Four pence.—Then you have Six Shillings and Eight Pence for oiling and winding up the Clock, both paid you at *Easter*. —The Pindar's Place which is worth Forty-Shillings a

Year,—you have got that too.—You are the Bailiff, which the late Parson got you, which brings you in Forty Shillings more.—Besides all this, you have Six Pounds a Year, paid you Quarterly for being Mole-Catcher to the Parish.”

The cast-breeches—Pickering and Pocklington—after covering the thin legs of Mark Slender for a time, eventually fell to “*Lorry Slim*, an unlucky Wight, by whom they are still worn;—in Truth, as you will guess, they are very thin by this Time;—But *Lorry* has a light Heart; and what recommends them to him is this, that, as thin as they are, he knows that *Trim*, let him say what he will to the contrary, still envies the *Possessor* of them,—and with all his Pride, would be very glad to wear them after *him*. ”

Though *Trim* had thus missed the plush breeches, he yet “had an Eye to, and firmly expected in his own Mind, the great Green Pulpit-Cloth and old Velvet Cushion [the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter], which were that very Year to be taken down;—which, by the Bye, could he have wheedled *John* a second time out of ‘em, as he hoped, he had made up the Loss of his Breeches Seven-fold. Now, you must know, this Pulpit-Cloth and Cushion were not in *John’s* Gift, but in the Church-Wardens, &c.—However, as I said above, that *John* was a leading Man in the Parish, *Trim* knew he could help him to them if he would:—But *John* had got a Surfeit of him;—so, when the Pulpit-Cloth, &c. were taken down, they were immediately given (*John* having a great Say in it) to *William Doe*, who understood very well what Use to make of them.”

After the old garments and worn pulpit decorations had been thus divided up—*William Doe*, *Trim*, and *Lorry Slim* each getting one or more pieces,—the parish fell back into its usual monotonous drone for seven or eight years, and would have droned on forever, had not the old parson left his flock for a better living and his place been supplied by a new incumbent, that is, by Dr. Gilbert. Then was struck up a lively tune. *Trim* at once hastened to the rectory, that is, to Bishopthorpe, to sell himself into servitude. Within a year, “he had,” it was his boast, “black’d the Parson’s Shoes without Count, and greased his Boots above fifty Times; . . . he had run for Eggs into the Town upon all Occasions;—whetted the

Knives at all Hours:—catched his Horse and rubbed him down, . . . never came to the House, but ask'd his Man kindly how he did. . . . When his Reverence cut his finger in paring an Apple, he went half a Mile to ask a cunning Woman, what was good to stanch Blood, and actually returned with a Cobweb in his breeches Pocket."

For these services Trim demanded nothing but "an old *watch-coat* that had hung up many years in the church," apparently of use to nobody. But Trim had set his heart upon it, humbly asking for it: "Nothing would serve *Trim* but he must take it home, in order to have it converted into a *warm Under-Petticoat* for his Wife, and a *Jerkin* for himself, against Winter; which, in a plaintive Tone, he most humbly begg'd his Reverence would consent to. . . . No sooner did the distinct Words—*Petticoat*—*poor Wife*—*warm Winter* strike upon his [the parson's] Ear,—but his Heart warmed, and, before *Trim* had well got to the End of his Petition, (being a Gentleman of a frank and open Temper) he told him he was welcome to it, with all his Heart and Soul. 'But, *Trim*,' says he, 'as you see I am but just got down to my Living, and am an utter Stranger to all Parish-Matters . . . and therefore cannot be a Judge whether 'tis fit for such a Purpose; or, if it is, in Truth, know not whether 'tis mine to bestow upon you or not;—you must have a Week or ten Days Patience, till I can make some Inquiries about it;—and, if I find it is in my Power, I tell you again, Man, your Wife is heartily welcome to an Under-Petticoat out of it, and you to a *Jerkin*, was the Thing as good again as you represent it.'"

Several days after this conversation, the parson, while turning the leaves of the parish registry in his study, came upon a memorandum about the watch-coat that opened his eyes as to its dignity and value. "The great Watch-Coat," he discovered, "was purchased and given above two hundred years ago, by the Lord of the Manor, to this Parish-Church, to the sole Use and Behoof of the poor Sextons thereof, and their Successors, for ever, to be worn by them respectively in winterly cold Nights, in ringing Complines, Passing-Bells, &c which the said Lord of the Manor had done in Piety, to keep the poor Wretches warm, and for the Good of his own Soul, for which

they were directed to pray, &c &c &c. ‘*Just Heaven!*’ said the Parson to himself, looking upwards, ‘*What an Escape have I had! Give this for an Under-Petticoat to Trim’s Wife! I would not have consented to such a Desecration to be Primate of all England; nay, I would not have disturb’d a single Button of it for half my Tythes!*’

“Scarce were the Words out of his Mouth, when in pops *Trim* with the whole Subject of the Exclamation under both his Arms.—I say, under both his Arms;—for he had actually got it ripp’d and cut out ready, his own Jerkin under one Arm, and the Petticoat under the other, in order to be carried to the Taylor to be made up,—and had just stepp’d in, in high Spirits, to shew the Parson how cleverly it had held out.” The parson, enraged at Trim’s impudence, ordered him “in a stern Voice, to lay the Bundles down upon the Table,—to go about his Business, and wait upon him, at his Peril, the next Morning at Eleven precisely: Against this Hour like a wise Man, the Parson had sent to desire *John* the Parish-Clerk, who bore an exceeding good Character as a Man of Truth.

. . . Him he sends for, with the Church-Wardens, and one of the Sides-Men, a grave, knowing, old Man, to be present: —For as *Trim* had with-held the whole Truth from the Parson, touching the Watch-Coat, he thought it probable he would as certainly do the same Thing to others.” The next morning at eleven, passions ran high at the rectory. Trim pleaded the Parson’s promise, and, failing there, enumerated his humble services as the parson’s man. But all in vain. The “pimping, pettifogging, ambidextrous Fellow . . . was kick’d out of Doors; and told, at his Peril, never to come there again.”

To the allegory which thus relates how Dr. Topham finally met with signal disaster at Bishopthorpe, in his attempt to cut up and make over for his son the patent of the Prerogative Courts of York, Sterne subjoined an amusing postscript on the numerous hands, including his own, that the church-lawyer uncovered in the dean’s pamphlet. They were all, said Sterne, as imaginary as the nineteen men in buckram with whom Jack Falstaff fought at Gad’s Hill. Then came a gay tail-piece, which the printer wished to put on the title-page, representing two game cocks, in full trim, beak to beak, ready to strike.

Not able to stop here, though the story was really over, Sterne appended to his allegory a humorous *Key* and two letters, which cover, in the whole, as many pages as the entire previous narrative. The *Key*, it might be observed, was developed from Swift's "Grand Committee" that sat upon the meaning of *A Tale of a Tub*. Since this part of the romance, as aforesaid, has been seen by few men, it may be quite worth while to give some account of it, if for no other reason than this. But the continuation brings with it, as will be apparent at once, some interesting facts about its author.

"This *Romance*," says the *Key*, which is of course no key, "was, by some Mischance or other, dropp'd in the *Minster-Yard, York*, and pick'd up by a Member of a small Political Club in that City; where it was carried, and publickly read to the Members the last Club Night.

"It was instantly agreed to, by a great Majority, That it was a *Political Romance*; but concerning what State or Potentate, could not so easily be settled amongst them.

"The President of the Night, who is thought to be as clear and quick-sighted as any one of the whole Club in Things of this Nature, discovered plainly, That the Disturbances therein set forth, related to those on the *Continent*:—That *Trim* could be Nobody but the King of *France*, by whose shifting and intriguing Behaviour, all *Europe* was set together by the Ears:—That *Trim's* Wife was certainly the *Empress*, who are as kind together, says he, as any Man and Wife can be for their Lives.——The more Shame for 'em, says an Alderman, low to himself.——Agreeable to this *Key*, continues the President,—The *Parson*, who I think is a most excellent Character,—is His Most Excellent Majesty King *George*; —*John*, the Parish-Clerk, is the King of *Prussia*; who, by the Manner of his first entering Saxony, shew'd the World most evidently,—That he did know how to lead out the Psalm, and in Tune and Time too, notwithstanding *Trim's* vile Insult upon him in that Particular. . . . The *Old-cast-Pair-of-Black-Plush-Breeches* must be *Saxony*, which the *Elector*, you see, *has left off wearing*:—And as for the *Great Watch-Coat*, which, you know, covers all, it signifies all *Europe*; comprehending, at least, so many of its different

States and Dominions, as we have any Concern with in the present War.

"I protest, says a Gentleman who sat next but one to the President, and who, it seems, was the Parson of the Parish, a Member not only of the Political, but also of a Musical Club in the next Street;—I protest, says he, if this explanation is right, which I think it is,—That the whole makes a very fine Symbol.—You have always some Musical Instrument or other in your Head, I think, says the Alderman.—Musical Instrument! replies the Parson, in Astonishment,—Mr. Alderman, I mean an Allegory; and I think the greedy Disposition of *Trim* and his Wife, in ripping the *Great Watch-Coat*, to Pieces in order to convert it into a Petticoat for the one, and a Jerkin for the other, is one of the most beautiful of the Kind I ever met with; and will shew all the World what have been the true Views and Intentions of the Houses of *Bourbon* and *Austria* in this abominable Coalition."

This hypothesis of the president, so ably supported by the parson, met at first with a good deal of favor; but before the evening was far advanced, one hard-headed member after another began to ask questions, and then to suggest other explanations of the *Romance* until the president was made to tremble for his own hypothesis. "Every Man turn'd the Story to what was swimming uppermost in his Brain;—so that, before all was over, there were full as many Satyres spun out of it,—and as great a Variety of Personages, Opinions, Transactions, and Truths, found to lay hid under the dark Veil of its Allegory, as ever were discovered in the thrice-renowned History of the Acts of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*."

A gentleman at the opposite side of the table, who knew nothing of the flirtations between France and Austria, but "had come piping-hot from reading the History of King *William's* and Queen *Anne's* Wars, . . . acquainted them, That the dividing the *Great Watch-Coat* did, and could allude to nothing else in the World but the *Partition Treaty*; which, by the Bye, he told them, was the most unhappy and scandalous Transaction in all King *William's Life*: It was that false Step, and that only, says he, rising from his Chair, and striking his Hand upon the Table with great Violence; it was that false Step, says he knitting his Brows and throwing his Pipe down

upon the Ground, that has laid the Foundation of all the Disturbances and Sorrows we feel and lament at this very Hour."

The debate, after many a wild-goose chase, was concluded by a gentleman of the law who had been sitting quietly by the fire. "He got up,—and, advancing towards the Table, told them, That the Error they had all gone upon thus far, in making out the several Facts in the *Romance*,—was in looking too high. . . . He then took the *Romance* in his Left Hand, and pointing with the Fore-Finger of his Right towards the second Page, he humbly begg'd Leave to observe, (and, to do him Justice, he did it in somewhat of a *forensic Air*) That the *Parson*, *John*, and *Sexton*, shewed incontestably the Thing to be *Tripartite*; now, if you will take Notice, Gentlemen, says he, these several Persons, who are Parties to this Instrument, are merely Ecclesiastical. . . . It appears very plain to me, That the *Romance*, neither directly nor indirectly, goes upon Temporal, but altogether upon Church-Matters.— And do not you think, says he, softening his Voice a little, and addressing himself to the Parson with a forced Smile,—Do not you think Doctor, says he, That the Dispute in the *Romance* between the *Parson* of the Parish and *John*, about the Height of *John's* Desk, is a very fine Panegyrick upon the *Humility of Church-Men?*"

The parson, nettled by this insult to the cloth, made a repartee on "the glorious Prolixity of the Law," which "highly tickled" an apothecary in the company, "who had paid the Attorney, the same Afternoon, a Demand of Three Pounds Six Shillings and Eight-Pence" for a lease and release. "He rubb'd his Hands together most fervently,—and laugh'd most triumphantly" at the parson's clever hit. The lawyer, understanding the real cause of the apothecary's jocular humor, turned to him, and "dropping his Voice a Third" said:

"You might well have spared this immoderate Mirth, since you and your Profession have the least Reason to triumph here of any of us.—I beg, quoth he, that you would reflect a Moment upon the *Cob-Web* which *Trim* went so far for, and brought back with an Air of so much Importance in his Breeches Pocket, to lay upon the Parson's cut Finger.— This said Cob-Web, Sir, is a fine-spun Satyre, upon the flimsy Nature of one Half of the Shop-Medicines, with which you

make a Property of the Sick, the Ignorant, and the Unsuspecting.”

Stung by this discourteous retort, the apothecary, a surgeon, a chemist, an undertaker, and another apothecary, “were all five rising up together from their Chairs, with full Intent of Heart, as it was thought, to return the *Reproof Valiant* there-upon.—But the President, fearing it would end in a general Engagement, he instantly call’d out, *To Order*; and thus saved a squabble. As soon as quiet was restored, it was ordered that the *Romance* and the minutes of the meeting likewise, as a key to the allegory, be printed at once and under one cover. A whitesmith, who had remained silent up to this time, objected to the publication of the *Key* on the ground that it was not one Key but “a whole Bunch of Keys.” “Let me tell you, Mr. President, says he, That the *Right Key*, if it could but be found, would be worth the whole bunch put together.”

The key that the whitesmith longed for has been placed in the reader’s hand bright and clean; but the key to the *Key*, so to speak, though it may be recovered, is now eaten out by the rust of time. The transactions of the “political club” by the Minster Yard, were, so far as we may surely go, a burlesque of the evenings Sterne passed with his convivial club that met at Sunton’s Coffee-House in Coney Street. Under the disguise of a surgeon, lawyer, apothecary, undertaker, and the president who loved an hypothesis better than his life, he drew little portraits of the members—their mannerisms and favorite gestures, and their vehemence in canvassing local and larger politics of the day. What kind of men they were further than this or what names they bore, we may never know, except, to be sure, that the Vicar of Sutton is among them. He is the parson of the parish, smart in repartee and ready to defend by a counter-jest an attack upon the cloth that he wears, just as was related in the old story of the puppy. He, too, had paid lawyers for leases and releases in the purchase of lands. There is, besides, that apt reference to Rabelais, which shows what was running in Sterne’s head; and finally there is the gentleman who, like my uncle Toby, spent his days and nights in reading of the wars of King William and Queen Anne.

According to the story, the *Romance* was read to the club, and, on the advice of the members, the manuscript was placed

in the hands of Cæsar Ward, editor and publisher of the *York Courant*, who promised to see the facetious little book safely through the press. From Sutton Sterne sent in to the York printer precise directions, which were made a part of the pamphlet, following next after the *Key*. The letter to Cæsar Ward, which runs thus, is a curious piece of humor:

“Sir,

“You write me Word that the Letter I wrote to you, and now stiled *The Political Romance* is printing; and that, as it was drop’d by Carelessness, to make some Amends, you will overlook the Printing of it yourself, and take Care to see that it comes right into the World.

“I was just going to return you Thanks, and to beg, withal, you would take Care That the Child be not laid at my Door. —— But having, this Moment, perused the *Reply* to the *Dean of York’s Answer*,——it has made me alter my Mind in that respect; so that, instead of making you the Request I intended, I do here desire That the Child be filiated upon me, *Laurence Sterne*, Prebendary of *York*, &c. &c. And I do, accordingly, own it for my own true and lawful Offspring.

“My Reason for this is plain;——for as, you see, the Writer of that *Reply*, has taken upon him to invade this *in-contested Right* of another Man’s in a Thing of this Kind, it is high Time for every Man to look to his own——Since, upon the *same Grounds*, and with half the Degree of Anger, that he affirms the Production of that very Reverend Gentleman’s to be the Child of many Fathers, some one in his Spight (for I am not without my Friends of that Stamp) may run headlong into the other Extream, and swear, That mine had no Father at all:——And therefore, to make use of *Bay’s Plea* in the *Rehearsal*, for *Prince Pretty-Man*; I merely do it, as he says, ‘for fear it should be said to be no Body’s Child at all.’

“I have only to add two Things:——First, That, at your Peril, you do not presume to alter or transpose one Word, nor rectify one false Spelling, nor so much as add or diminish one Comma or Tittle, in or to my *Romance*: For if you do,——In case any of the Descendants of *Curl* should think fit to invade my Copy-Right, and print it over again in my Teeth,

I may not be able, in a Court of Justice, to swear strictly to my own Child, after you had *so large a Share* in the begetting it.

"In the next Place, I do not approve of your *quaint Conceit* at the Foot of the Title Page of my *Romance*.—It would only set People on smiling a Page or two before I give them Leave;—and besides, all Attempts either at Wit or Humour, in that Place, are a Forestalling of what slender Entertainment of those Kinds are prepared within: Therefore I would have it stand thus:

"YORK:

"Printed in the Year 1759.
"(Price One Shilling.)

"I know you will tell me, That it is set too high; and as a Proof, you will say, That this last *Reply* to the *Dean's Answer* does consist of near as many Pages as mine; and yet is all sold for Six-pence.—But mine, my dear Friend, is quite a *different Story*:—It is a Web wrought out of my own Brain, of twice the Fineness of this which he has spun out of his; and besides, I maintain it, it is of a more curious Pattern, and could not be afforded at the Price that his is sold at, by any *honest Workman in Great-Britain*.

"Moreover, Sir, you do not consider, That the writer is interested in his *Story*, and that it is his Business to set it a-going at *any Price*: And indeed, from the Information of Persons conversant in Paper and Print, I have very good Reason to believe, if he should sell every Pamphlet of them, he would inevitably be a *Great Loser* by it. This I believe verily, and am,

<p>"Sutton on the Forest, Jan. 20, 1759.</p>	<p>"Dear Sir, "Your obliged Friend "and humble Servant, "LAURENCE STERNE."</p>
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Having thus thrown off the mask of anonymity already worn thin, Sterne closed the whole performance with a signed letter to Dr. Topham, bearing the same date as the one just quoted. The lawyer, in his last pamphlet, had questioned the accuracy of Sterne's memory about the Sessions Dinner, and

hinted that the Vicar of Sutton had had a good deal to do with the dean's previous pamphlet, as if Dr. Fountayne, without the aid of friends, were not quite equal to a controversy. Sterne took up in detail these and other points, assuring Dr. Topham that he had nothing to do with the dean's *Answer* beyond the attestation which he signed with others, and that his memory was still good. "As for the many coarse and unchristian Insinuations," said Sterne to Dr. Topham, "scatter'd throughout your *Reply*,—as it is my Duty to beg God to forgive you, so I do from my Heart: Believe me, Dr. *Topham*, they hurt yourself more than the Person they are aimed at; And when the *first Transport* of Rage is a little over, they will grieve you more too. And for the little that remains unanswered in yours, —I believe I could, in another half Hour, set it right in the Eyes of the World:—But this is not my Business.—And if it is thought worth the while, which I hope it never will, I know no one more able to do it than the very Reverend and Worthy Gentleman whom you have so unhandsomely insulted upon that Score."

After this pretty compliment to the dean, Sterne added a postscript, which is, in conventional phrase, the best part of the letter:

"I beg Pardon for *clapping* this upon the *Back of the Romance*,—which is done out of no Disrespect to you.—But the *Vehicle* stood ready at the Door,—and as I was to pay the whole Fare, and there was Room enough behind it, —it was the cheapest and readiest Conveyance I could think of."

At the end of all came the Archangel Gabriel, as an appropriate design, resting upon a bank of clouds and blowing the last trumpet.

Altogether, the *Romance* was a clever elaboration of a phase of Swift's cruel and humorous philosophy. Reduce men to pygmies, and they at once become in character and conduct ludicrous and contemptible.

"Above five hundred copies" of the pamphlet, it was said, "were struck off"; and "what all the serious arguments in the world could not effect, this brought about." At once Sterne had at his feet both friends and enemies, begging that the *Romance* be suppressed. Dr. Topham sent word that he was

ready, on this condition, to "quit his pretensions." Certain members of the York chapter told Sterne that this humorous recital of their disputes would never do. The archbishop and the dean were, to say truth, each handsomely complimented by the way; but the laugh was, after all, on them as well as on Dr. Topham; the publication, from any point of view was, they thought, offensive to the dignity of the Church. Apparently the man most active in the affair was Dr. Herring, the chancellor of the diocese, who tried to separate Sterne and Dean Fountayne, and almost succeeded in the attempt. Over the fracas Sterne became so hot that he privately expressed regrets for his encomium upon a "weak and ignorant" dean, and doubts whether Dr. Topham deserved to be hung up "in a ridiculous light." His heat, however, quickly subsided. Letters passed between Sterne and Dr. Fountayne which cemented anew their friendship "beyond the power of any future breach." And though with reluctance, Sterne heeded the advice of his clerical friends that the *Romance* be suppressed. Accordingly, with his assent, an official of the cathedral—probably the chancellor—bought up the copies remaining in the book-stalls, and burned them with those still at the printer's. That was the current story thirty years after. But several copies must have been sold beyond recovery; and Sterne himself managed in some way to keep from the flames "three or four" other copies which he guarded for the delight of his friends.*

* For statements in this paragraph, see *Whitefoord Papers*, 229; *London Chronicle*, May 3-6, 1760; and E. J. Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, II, 175-176, 271.

C H A P. VIII.

The Publication of Tristram Shandy—Volumes I and II. January, 1759—May, 1760

I.

THE burning of the *Political Romance* was a dramatic incident that “contributed,” according to the newspapers of the next year, “more to raise the reputation of Parson Yorick, than any thing he could have published. . . . Ten times more was said about this piece than it deserved, because it was burnt; and the general voice, which never reports without exaggeration, . . . cried it up as one of the most perfect and excellent things human invention ever had produced.” To Sterne the miscarriage of his first literary effort was a keen disappointment, for “till he had finished his *Watchcoat*, he hardly knew that he could write at all, much less with humour so as to make his reader laugh.”

Having once discovered his talent, the country parson, then in his forty-sixth year, gave himself up to the exercise and delight of it for the rest of his life. *Tristram Shandy* was begun—so the book itself says by indication—late in January, 1759, immediately after the mishap to the *Political Romance*. Sterne wrote as fast as he “possibly could,” reaching the eighteenth chapter by the ninth of March, six weeks and some odd days after first setting out. By the twenty-sixth of the same month, he was well on in the twenty-first chapter; and by June, the first draft of two volumes was completed. His genius bore him on so easily and rapidly through the later stages that he felt it was in him to write two more volumes every year so long as he should live.

There were, however, times of doubt and depression. To say truth, *Tristram Shandy* came near going the way of the *Political Romance*. While the book was in making, Sterne took some of the loose sheets over to Stillington Hall, where he read them to Stephen Croft and a group of friends brought

together for the purpose after dinner. Some of the company “fell asleep,” said the brother of the squire, “at which Sterne was so nettled that he threw the manuscript into the fire, and had not luckily Mr. Croft rescued the scorched papers from the flames, the work wou’d have been consigned to oblivion.” As soon as the copy was fully written out, Sterne consulted various friends at York about it. One of them, who may stand for several, said: “I took the Liberty to point out some gross Allusions which I apprehended would be Matter of just Offense, and especially when coming from a Clergyman, as they would betray a Forgetfulness of his Character.” In reply Sterne “observed, that an Attention to his Character would damp his Fire and check the Flow of his Humour, and that if he went on, and hoped to be read, he must not look at his Band or his Cassock.” Marmaduke Fothergill of York, the younger of that name, whom Sterne described as “my best of critics and well-wishers,” kept iterating: “Get your preferment first, Lory, and then write and welcome.” “But suppose,” replied Sterne, “preferment is long o’coming—and, for aught I know, I may not be prefer’d till the resurrection of the just —and am all that time in labour, how must I bear my pains.” Against the cautions of another he cited later the name of a great predecessor, saying: “I . . . deny I have gone as far as Swift: he keeps a due distance from Rabelais; I keep a due distance from him. Swift has said five hundred things I durst not say—unless I was Dean of St. Patrick’s.” Finally, to ease his “mind of all trouble upon the topic of discretion,” Sterne decided to appeal to Archbishop Gilbert, should his Grace come down to York in the autumn. Whether or not the archbishop read and approved, the author does not say.

When the book was ready for the press, as Sterne thought, in June, he offered it to the local booksellers; but “they wou’d not have anything to say to it, nor wou’d they offer any price for it.” He then tried the Dodsleys, the great London publishers in Pall Mall. From the correspondence, of which only one letter is extant, it appears that in June Sterne wrote to one of the Dodsleys, Robert without doubt, offering him *Tristram Shandy* for fifty pounds. Dodsley wrote back “that it was too much to risk on a single volume, which, if it happened not to

sell, would be hard upon his brother."* By this time Sterne was beginning to heed the strictures that were passed upon his manuscript. Besides the caution of his clerical brethren that he should consider the solemn color of his coat, to which a meditation upon death would be "a more suitable trimming," some objections were made to his style as too ornate, free, and unconsidered. "To sport too much with your wit, or the game that wit has pointed out," Sterne admitted to a nameless friend, "is surfeiting; like toying with a man's mistress, it may be very delightful solacement to the inamorato, but little to the by-stander." Though Sterne said further, "I have burnt more wit than I have published," he nevertheless promised to avoid the fault that was pointed out to him, so far as he could without spoiling his book, which, he insisted, must remain "a picture of myself." To the same critic the mischance that befell Dr. Slop while approaching Shandy Hall on a dark night seemed too minutely described. Sterne defended himself by an appeal to the manner of Cervantes, but finally brought himself to admit: "Perhaps this is overloaded, and I can ease it." All who saw the manuscript knew of course that Dr. Slop was a satire upon Dr. John Burton; and there are indications that several did not approve of the attack. As a result of these criticisms, Sterne carefully revised his manuscript during the summer, pruning and grafting. In June he had enough material, said one who claims to have passed a whole night with him over his papers, to fill "four volumes," instead of the two that were eventually published.

Besides cutting away many passages—a half may be an exaggeration—Sterne added, according to his own account, "about a hundred and fifty pages," and took "all locality" out of the book; that is, he removed here and there a sting from the local satire. Thus amended, *Tristram Shandy* met with great favor. By October, "a strong interest [was] formed and forming in its behalf"; and the next month rumor among his friends as far away as London, had it that Mr. Sterne was "busy writing an extraordinary book." Among the gentlemen at York who liked *Tristram Shandy* because it made them laugh, was "a bachelor of a liberal turn of mind" named Lee,

* Robert Dodsley had just turned over the management of his business to his brother James.

who came forward early in the autumn and promised Sterne "one hundred pounds towards the printing." Fortified by this substantial sum, Sterne submitted new proposals to Dodsley, asking for his aid in placing *Tristram Shandy* before the public. The letter to Dodsley, bearing no date but belonging to October or thereabouts, runs in part as follows:

"I propose . . . to print a lean edition, in two small volumes, of the size of *Rasselas*, and on the same type and paper, at my own expence, merely to feel the pulse of the world, and that I may know what price to set upon the remaining volumes from the reception of these. If my book sells and has the run our critics expect, I propose to free myself of all future troubles of the kind, and bargain with you, if possible, for the rest as they come out, which will be every six months. If my book fails of success, the loss falls where it ought to do. The same motives which inclined me first to offer you this trifle, incline me to give you the whole profits of the sale (except what Mr. Hinxman* sells here, which will be a great many), and to have them sold only at your shop upon the usual terms in these cases. The book shall be printed here, and the impression sent up to you; for as I live at York; and shall correct every proof myself, it shall go perfect into the world, and be printed in so creditable a way as to paper, type, &c., as to do no dishonour to you, who, I know, never chuse to print a book meanly. Will you patronize my book upon these terms, and be as kind a friend to it as if you had bought the copyright?"

In a postscript Sterne added at the end: "I had desired Mr. Hinxman to write the purport of this to you by this post; but lest he should omit it, or not sufficiently explain my intention, I thought best to trouble you with a letter myself."

The arrangements for publication outlined in this letter were afterwards somewhat modified, but just how can not be determined beyond doubt, inasmuch as the succeeding correspondence between Sterne, Hinxman, and Dodsley is irretrievably lost. According to John Croft, Dodsley now offered Sterne

* John Hinxman, a York bookseller. In 1757, Hinxman, who had served his apprenticeship with the Dodsleys, came to York and bought out the business of Mrs. Hildyard, the widow of John Hildyard (who had recently died). See R. Straus, *Robert Dodsley*, 260 (London, 1910).

forty pounds for the copyright* on conditions which the author was unwilling to accept. Be that as it may, by December, 1759, Sterne's perplexities over his book were at an end, and he was anxiously awaiting his fate, uncertain of what it might be. As the date of publication was approaching, he remarked: "I fear *Tristram Shandy* must go into the world with a hundred faults—if he is so happy as to have some striking beauties, merciful and good Judges will spare it as God did Sodom for the ten Righteous that are therein." The die had been cast. On January 1, 1760, the *London Chronicle* made the following announcement:

This Day was published,
Printed on a superfine Writing Paper, and a new
Letter, in two Volumes, Price 5s. neatly bound,

The LIFE and OPINIONS of
TRISTRAM SHANDY, Gent.

York, printed for and sold by John Hinxman
(Successor to the late Mr. Hildyard) Bookseller in
Stonegate: J. Dodsley in Pallmall and M. Cooper in
Pater-noster-row, London: and by all the Booksellers.

Whether this first instalment of *Tristram Shandy* was really printed at York or in London is a question in dispute among bibliographers. Sterne's design, as may be seen from the letter to Dodsley in October, was to place his book in the hands of a local printer, most likely Ann Ward, widow and successor of Cæsar Ward, at the Sign of the Bible in Coney Street, "with whose neat and accurate typography," says Robert Davies, the antiquary, "the author was well acquainted." Cæsar Ward, who died in April, 1759, had printed not only the *Political Romance*, but also two of Yorick's sermons. To the same press Sterne would naturally entrust *Tristram Shandy*. Without mentioning the name of the printer, John Croft remarked, in agreement with others, who ought to have known, that the first edition, running to "about two hundred copies," was "first printed at York," and adds that Sterne sent

* Neither this nor later instalments of *Tristram Shandy* were entered at Stationers' Hall, though we find Sterne subsequently disposing of his copyrights.

a set of them up to Dodsley, who "returned for an answer that they were not saleable." Against these assertions the bibliographical evidence, however, is nearly if not quite conclusive. All copies of the first edition in two volumes (so far as they have been inspected by the present writer or described by others at first hand) contain on the title-page the title: "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman," a Greek quotation from the *Encheiridion** of Epictetus, the number of the volume, and the date "1760." There is nothing more; no place of issue, no name of publisher, no name of author. It is the same for all copies extant, so far as they are known: for those now in accessible private collections and for the copy—presumably an advance copy—which Sterne presented to his physician, Dr. John Dealtry of York.† The notion which still half obtains that there was an earlier private edition of *Tristram Shandy*, perhaps bearing on the title-page "York, 1759," is erroneous. The paper and the typography of the first edition of the first two volumes are precisely the same as those of the third and fourth volumes, which were printed in London the next year for R. and J. Dodsley. It is of course possible, though not probable, that Dodsley, in bringing out the second instalment of the book, exactly matched the paper and the type of a York printer; but the natural inference is that Dodsley, on terms not now known, likewise had the first edition of the first instalment printed in London for Hinxman; that he kept with reluctance a bundle for the London market, and sent the rest down to York, to his former apprentice, who may be regarded as the real publisher of *Tristram Shandy*, in so far as it had any outside of the author and his friend Mr. Lee. The book was quietly placed on sale at York, without any advertisement in the local newspaper until February 12, 1760.

It was a current story that Sterne set about and continued *Tristram Shandy* as a relief to melancholy. "Every sentence," it was said, "had been conceived and written under the greatest heaviness of heart." Certain it is that the composition of his book was accompanied by domestic troubles that might have crushed a man of grave temperament, but they affected the light-hearted Yorick little if at all. The last reference in

* Ἐγχειρίδιον Cap. 10.

† This copy is described in the *Athenæum*, February 23, 1878.

T H E
L I F E
A N D
O P I N I O N S
O F
TRISTRAM SHANDY,
GENTLEMAN.

Ταρασσει τες Ἀνδρώπες & τὰ Πράγματα,
αλλα τὰ περι τῶν Πραγμάτων, Δογματα.

V O L. I.

1760.

*Facsimile of Title Page to the First Edition of
“Tristram Shandy”*

sent his Latin epistle, from which we have already quoted, over to Hall-Stevenson about a projected trip to London. He was sitting at the time in Sunton's Coffee-House on the eve of departure, undisturbed by the loud conversation around him, as he began recklessly: "*Nescio quid est materia cum me, sed sum fatigatus et ægrotus de meâ uxore plus quam unquam—et sum possessus cum diabolo qui pellet me in urbem.*"

Over against this letter with its disagreeable inferences should be placed the rather pretty domestic scenes of 1758, when the parson and his wife, as described in the Blake correspondence, were frequently taking a wheel together into York for their winter purchases and visits to friends. But sometime in 1759, affairs reached a crisis, owing, rumor had it, to Sterne's misconduct. His wife, suddenly stricken with palsy, "went out of her senses," and "fancied herself the Queen of Bohemia." Her husband, falling in with the whim of her delusion, "treated her as such, with all the supposed respect due to a crowned head." "In order to induce her to take the air," it was said further, "he proposed coursing in the way practised in Bohemia. For that purpose he procured bladders and filled them with beans and tied them to the wheels of a single horse-chair, when he drove madam into a stubble field. With the motion of the carriage and the bladders' rattle it alarmed the hares and the greyhounds were ready to take them."^{*} The sad condition of Mrs. Sterne affected the health of little Lydia, who had been ailing for some time, throwing the "poor child into a fever." On the approach of winter, Sterne took a small house in the Minster Yard at York for his wife and daughter, that the one might have the best medical attendance, and the other "begin dancing" and be put to school. Of Lydia he said: "If I cannot leave her a fortune, I will at least give her an education." And of his wife he wrote to Mrs. Montagu: "We have settled accounts to each other's satisfaction and honour, and I am persuaded shall end our days without one word of reproach or even incivility."

Regardful as was Sterne for the comfort of his family, the illness of his wife nevertheless sat lightly upon him. While she was living by the minster, perhaps under the care of "a lunatic doctor," the unsteady parson consoled himself by car-

* John Croft, *Scrapeana*, 22 (second ed., York, 1792).

rying on a flirtation with Miss Catherine Fourmantelle, a professional singer, then in lodgings with her mother at Mrs. Joliffe's, close by in Stonegate. The Fourmantelles belonged to a family of French Protestants who fled to England for refuge in the reign of Louis the Fourteenth. "They styled themselves," said John Murray, the London publisher, who informed himself in the matter, "Beranger de Fourmantel, and possessed estates in St. Domingo, of which they were deprived by the measures consequent on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. An elder sister, it appears, conformed to the Church of Rome, returned to Paris, and was reinstated in the family property."* The younger sister, Catherine, a woman of much beauty and good character as well as birth, endeavored to support herself and mother by her voice. She came down to York from London in the autumn of 1759, under an engagement to perform through the winter at the annual subscription concerts held in the Assembly Rooms. On the evening of November 29, for example, a day of thanksgiving throughout Great Britain for Admiral Hawke's victory over the French, the event was celebrated at York by a concert of vocal and instrumental music in which "Miss Fourmantel" took part with "the best voices in town." She sang again at the Assembly Rooms on the last day of the year and enjoyed during the ball that followed her performance a *tête-à-tête* with Yorick over his "witty smart book." At his dictation, she wrote of him the next day to Garrick: "You must understand he is a kind and generous friend of mine, whom Providence has attach'd to me in this part of the world, where I came a stranger." Near the close of her engagement, there was a concert for her benefit at the Assembly Rooms, for which she thanked "the ladies and gentlemen who honour'd her with their presence."† The progress of the sentimental intrigue is recorded in a series of brief notes that Sterne sent to Miss Fourmantelle during her stay at York. In the first of them,

* Murray's preface to Sterne's letters to Miss Fourmantelle as originally published in *Miscellanies of the Philobiblon Society*, II (London, 1855-56).

† *York Courant*, February 5 and 19, 1760. The benefit was on February 15.

Sterne was not quite certain how his advances would be received, for he wrote on a Sunday:

"Miss, —— I shall be out of all humour with you, and besides will not paint your Picture in black, which best becomes you, unless you accept of a few Bottles of Calcavillo, which I have order'd my Man to leave at the Dore in my Absence; —— the Reason of this trifling Present, you shall know on Tuesday night—and I half insist upon it, that you invent some plausible Excuse to be home by 7.—Yrs. Yorick."

Miss Fourmantelle was evidently glad of the delicious wine and the assurance that she should have her portrait, if all went well, on the next Tuesday evening. The sweet Calcavillo was succeeded by "a pot of sweetmeats" and "a pot of honey," though Miss Fourmantelle was "sweeter than all the flowers it came from," and, most strangely, by a copy of Sterne's first printed sermon, along with the following letter:

"My Dear Kitty,—I beg you will accept of the inclosed Sermon, which I do not make you a present of, merely because it was wrote by myself, but because there is a beautiful Character in it, of a tender and compassionate Mind in the Picture given of Elijah. Read it, my dear Kitty, and believe me when I assure you that I see something of the same kind and gentle disposition in your heart which I have painted in the Prophet's, which has attach'd me so much to you and your Interests that I shall live and dye your affectionate and faithful Laurence Sterne.

"P. S.—If possible I will see you this afternoon before I go to Mr. Fothrigils. Adieu, dear friend—I had the pleasure to drink your health last night."

The intimacy grew until it became at last "My dear, dear Kitty," and "I love you to distraction . . . and will love you to eternity."

This open flirtation—for the two met and conversed publicly at the Assembly Rooms and at the houses of mutual friends, and went shopping together at the mercer's—seems to have caused little or no scandal in easy-going York. Before *Tristram Shandy* went to press, Sterne touched upon the episode here and there in his book, wherein "dear, dear Kitty" becomes "dear, dear Jenny," wife, mistress, or child, which-

ever of the three the reader wills. The relation was, however, if Sterne's word is to be taken for it, "but that tender and delicious sentiment, which ever mixes in friendship, where there is a difference in sex."

Tristram Shandy, coming out at this time, made its way rapidly. Writing for Sterne from York to Garrick on January 1, 1760, in the letter from which I have already quoted, Miss Fourmantelle said: "There are two Volumes just published here, which have made a great noise and have had a prodigious run; for, in two days after they came out, the Bookseller sold two hundred, and continues selling them very fast." *Tristram Shandy* was for York, first of all, a local book, in a measure like the *Political Romance*, but moving through a larger and less perilous series of portraits than that afforded by religious controversy. The author had, to be sure, "altered and new dressed" the first draft for the removal of "all locality"; but it could not have been changed in its prime essentials. Indeed it is hinted in the book itself that a key might be prepared to certain passages and incidents which have "a private interpretation." As many times related, Sterne depicted himself as prebendary and rural parson in the indiscreet and outspoken Yorick who scattered his "gibes and his jests about him," never thinking that they would be remembered against him. Other characteristics of Sterne came out in Mr. Tristram Shandy, the name by which he first chose to be known in letters, and most appropriately, for *shan* or *shandy* is still a dialectical word in parts of Yorkshire for gay, unsteady, or crack-brained. It is of course really Sterne who speaks when Mr. Tristram Shandy says, after complaining of his asthma: "I have been the continual sport of what the world calls Fortune; and though I will not wrong her by saying, She has ever made me feel the weight of any great or signal evil;—yet with all the good temper in the world, I affirm it of her, that in every stage of my life, and at every turn and corner where she could get fairly at me, the ungracious duchess has pelted me with a set of as pitiful misadventures and cross accidents as ever small HERO sustained."

The elder Shandys, father and uncle, were obviously less specialized portraits, being the compound of many observations and memories reaching back to boyhood, when Laurie

and his mother followed the poor ensign's regiment from barrack to barrack. A claim was put forward in *Macmillan's Magazine* for July, 1873, that my uncle Toby had an original in "a certain Captain Hinde" of Preston Castle, Berkshire. Sterne, it is said, made frequent visits to this "old soldier and country gentleman, . . . eccentric—full of military habits and recollections—simple-hearted, benevolent, and tenderly kind to the dumb creatures of the earth and air." There may be something in this persisting tradition, but the main hobby of my uncle Toby was evidently a hit at Sterne's friend—of uncertain name—in the *Key to the Political Romance*, who, with mind filled with the exploits of Marlborough, insisted on interpreting the incidents of the church quarrel in the terms of King William's wars. Mr. Walter Shandy also belongs, in one or more of his characteristics, to that convivial company which met at Sunton's Coffee-House. He was a further development of the president of the evening, who set forth his hypothesis as soon as the members were assembled, and fought for it stubbornly to the last ditch, preferring death to surrender. Yorkshire likewise knew that Eugenius, who plays the part of good counsellor to Yorick, meant John Hall-Stevenson, and people must have relished the absurdity.

To Dr. Topham, Sterne merely alluded by the way, under the name of Didius, the great church-lawyer, who had "a particular turn for taking to pieces, and new framing over again, all kinds of instruments" in order to insert his legal "wham-wham." Him he reserved for future instalments of his book, shifting his satire in the meantime to Dr. John Burton, re-named Dr. Slop, Papist and man-midwife. No one could doubt who was intended by "the little, squat, uncourtly figure . . . waddling thro' the dirt upon the vertebræ of a little diminutive pony" out to Shandy Hall to try his newly invented forceps upon the head of Mr. Tristram Shandy. To add to the gaiety of it all, Dr. Burton, woefully lacking in a sense of humor, solemnly disclaimed all resemblance to the caricature Sterne had drawn of him. Then another doctor of the neighborhood, thinking that Sterne might have meant him, called the parson up early one morning and entered vigorous protest against the "indecent liberties taken with him." After vain attempts to persuade the doctor of his error, Sterne, ac-

cording to the story, lost patience, and remarked sharply as his visitor was going: "Sir, I have not hurt you; but take care: I am not born yet; but heaven knows what I may do in the two next volumes."

Amid the stir over *Tristram Shandy* at home, Sterne was looking towards London. "I wrote," he said, "not to be *fed* but to be *famous*." York might purchase the book for its local allusions, jests, and ridicule of a well-known "scientific operator" seen on the streets every day; but in London it would be judged on its wider merits, if it had any, quite apart from personalities. Could *Tristram Shandy* stand that test? To all appearance it was a mad performance not much like anything that had ever come from the press. No wonder Dodsley hesitated and at first refused to become its sponsor. It is a novel, people would say, in which nothing happens, in which everything is topsy-turvy, with a dedication, a mock epistle at that, in the seventh chapter, and a sermon on conscience at the end, —to pass over without comment an impossible marriage-settlement, stars and long dashes, and an entire page smutched with printer's ink. It is called *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*; but the gentleman is only an embryo. It turns out to be the life and opinions of the father and uncle of Tristram Shandy; and why not call it so? That would be the publisher's point of view; and in truth not much could be said for the book on a cursory perusal.

But a reader at leisure could not fail to see that there might be method in Sterne's madness: that every part of the book, every episode, every digression, whim, aside, or innuendo, was perhaps carefully premeditated, and the whole organized on a plan which the author was keeping a half secret. As the Greek motto on the title-page announced to all who could read it, the book dealt not with adventures and men in action, but with men and their opinions. Sterne knew that character may be revealed quite as well by what men say as by what they do. If you know what a man really thinks on a variety of subjects, there is nothing left to know about him; for you have got his heart and his brain. As if in burlesque of petty details of childhood prevalent in current fiction, Sterne set out with the conception and prenatal history of his hero, bringing to bear on the ludicrous theme quaint and musty speculations of medical

writers over the animal spirits and the nature, endowments, and rights of the *homunculus*. After merely stating *when* Tristram was born, he proceeded to explain *how*, but stopping to describe the preliminaries, he did not advance beyond them. Mention of the midwife of the parish led Sterne on to the parson's wife who set her up in business, and to parson Yorick himself, who could not be dropped without a full portrait, for he was most singular in his habits, humors, friendships, and death. That done, it was necessary to give some account of the hero's father and mother—of Mr. Walter Shandy, a Turkey merchant, who gained a competency in trade, and then retired from London to Shandy Hall to pass the rest of his days there with a dull and good-natured wife.

Naturally of an “acute and quick sensibility,” the “little rubs and vexations” incident to the marriage state made the squire rather peevish towards others, though it was “a drollish and witty kind of peevishness.” He was indeed so “frank and generous” in his heart that his friends never took offence at the “little ebullitions of this subacid humour.” They rather enjoyed and relished it. Having nothing to do, Mr. Shandy spent his time on the old books that had been collected by his ancestors. In the course of his reading he fell in with the logicians and minute philosophers, from whom was derived the notion that there is something sacred about an hypothesis, as a means of arriving at truth, especially about a favorite one of his own making. “He was,” says Sterne, “systematical, and, like all systematick reasoners, he would move both heaven and earth, and twist and torture every thing in nature, to support his hypothesis.” It was his opinion “That there was a strange kind of magick bias, which good or bad names, as he called them, irresistibly impressed upon our characters and conduct.

... How many CÆSARS and POMPEYS, he would say, by mere inspiration of the names, have been rendered worthy of them? And how many, he would add, are there, who might have done exceeding well in the world, had not their characters and spirits been totally depressed and NICODEMUS'D into nothing?”

It was quite right that the Yorkshire squire should have a foil in his brother, my uncle Toby, unlike him in temperament and all else, save a crack in the brain that bespoke them

of the same Shandy blood. As a boy, my uncle Toby read *Guy of Warwick*, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, and all the romances of war and adventure he could find in his father's library or purchase with stray pence from the pedlar of chap-books. A young man, he enlisted in King William's army, and after years of honorable service, received an embarrassing wound in the groin at the siege of Namur. Sent home, he retired to a neat house of his own near Shandy Hall, and by the aid of Corporal Trim, set up on the bowling green in the rear of the house-garden, fortifications with "batteries, saps, ditches, and palisadoes," by means of which, with the assistance of maps and books on military science, he followed Marlborough's army on the Continent, demolishing town after town in imitation of the great captain. War, which brutalizes most men, developed in my uncle Toby all the finer instincts of human nature. He was of a peaceful, placid nature—"no jarring element in it,—all was mixed up so kindly within him; my uncle Toby had scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly.

"—Go—says he, one day at dinner, to an over-grown one which had buzzed about his nose, and tormented him cruelly all dinner-time,—and which after infinite attempts, he had caught at last, as it flew by him;—I'll not hurt thee, says my uncle *Toby*, rising from his chair, and going across the room, with the fly in his hand.—I'll not hurt a hair of thy head:—Go, says he, lifting up the sash, and opening his hand as he spoke, to let it escape; go, poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee?—This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me."

These two brothers and the corporal, Sterne brought together in the back parlor of Shandy Hall on an evening while the parish midwife was above stairs with Mrs. Shandy. Then entered Dr. Slop, the celebrated *accoucheur*, fresh from disaster on the road, who was brain-cracked like the rest. At once began, to end only with Trim's recital of the sermon, the mad clash of opinions, accompanied by the most brilliant wit, irony, and mockery. There had been nothing comparable to the performance since the days of Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Not that Sterne really imitated Shakespeare anywhere; but he thoroughly understood Shakespeare's

fools, and created anew a rare company of them. Then he set them at their wild play.

In describing *Tristram Shandy*, I have done not much more than paraphrase with free hand what was said of it within a few months of its publication. The honor of writing the first printed account of the book belongs to one of that company of literary hacks, who, with Ralph Griffiths at their head, presided over the *Monthly Review*, which issued at the end of every month from the sign of the Dunciad in the Strand. The men on this magazine were all so dull, said Dr. Johnson, that they were compelled to read the books they undertook to review. The scribbler to whom *Tristram Shandy* was assigned for December, 1759, prepared a long and faithful appreciation, patched with striking excerpts, and mild censure of the style as too much in the manner of Swift, and closing with a cordial recommendation of Mr. Tristram Shandy to the reader, "as a writer infinitely more ingenious and entertaining than any of the present race of novelists." Next came a paragraph of general praise in the *Critical Review* for January, 1760, managed by a society of smart gentlemen whom Smollett had brought together and trained, if I may quote the great lexicographer once more, to review books without ever reading them. The *London Magazine* followed in February with a high-flown apostrophe, beginning "Oh rare Tristram Shandy! —Thou very sensible—humorous—pathetick—humane—unaccountable!—what shall we call thee? —Rabelais, Cervantes, What? . . . If thou publishest fifty volumes, all abounding with the profitable and pleasant like these, we will venture to say thou wilt be read and admir'd." By this time the sketch of Parson Yorick, evidently the author himself, said the reviewers, was circulating through the newspapers, with blind conjecture as to who he might really be in the flesh.

During these months of suspense, Sterne was staying at York that he might be near his wife and Miss Fourmantelle. Thus far he could have discovered nothing very unusual in the course his book was taking, though the reviews were rather more favorable than might have been anticipated of so wild a performance. Spice was now added to its reception by a letter from a London physician of his acquaintance, who took him

to task for writing a book which could not "be put into the hands of any woman of character," and for alluding, under a gross Rabelaisian name, to a senile infirmity—"a droll foible," Sterne called it—of the late Dr. Richard Mead, one of the most distinguished physicians of the age. The unknown physician intimated that he was protesting not for himself alone, but with the assent of Dr. Mead's sons-in-law—Sir Edward Wilmot and Dr. Frank Nicholls, physician to his Majesty George the Second. After waiting four days for his humors to cool, Sterne sent back a gay reply in repudiation of the text that had been thrust upon him by his correspondent: *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. "I declare," averred Sterne of the text, "I have considered the wisdom and foundation of it over and over again, as dispassionately and charitably as a good Christian can, and, after all, I can find nothing in it, or make more of it, than a nonsensical lullaby of some nurse, put into Latin by some pedant, to be chanted by some hypocrite to the end of the world, for the consolation of departing lechers." The letter further contained an adroit defence of his conduct on all points and a casual statement of his serious aim to do the world good by ridiculing what he thought "of disservice to sound learning," wherever it might be uncovered. His age certainly needed the correction which it received from him, but of that it is not here to speak.

Out of this hot correspondence, of which nothing is left save Sterne's one reply, came the news, just as Sterne would have it, that while *Tristram Shandy* was causing "a terrible fermentation" among London prudes and Sangrados, Garrick had read, admired, and passed the book on to his friends. It was a copy that the author had sent him from York. As soon as Sterne heard of Garrick's approbation, which he prized above any other's, he thanked him in a very fine letter for "the great Honour and Service your good word has done me," and in return offered to make a "Cervantic Comedy" out of *Tristram Shandy*. "Half a word of Encouragement," he said absurdly, "would be enough to make me conceive and bring forth something for the Stage (how good or how bad is another Story)." The great actor must have smiled when he read this proposal.

II.

WITH Garrick, the regulator of public taste, for its sponsor, the success of *Tristram Shandy* might well seem assured. Garrick's world, as Sterne knew, comprised the whole world of fashion. What cared Sterne for anybody else? Fine ladies and fine gentleman who were bored by books, would read, he was aware, anything to which Garrick gave the cue. London was as eager to see Sterne as Sterne was to see London. The story which I have now to tell, much of it in the words of John Croft's reminiscences and Sterne's own letters to friends at home, reads like romance rather than sober history. The visit to London came about by mere accident. On a morning of the first week in March, Stephen Croft, John's brother, rode in from Stillington for the York coach up to London. Meeting Sterne on the street, he offered to take him along as a companion and to pay all expenses, going and coming. Sterne at first demurred, saying that he had scarce time to prepare for the journey and that it would be wrong to leave his wife in her wretched illness. His hesitancy was, however, easily overcome, and within an hour after packing "his best breeches," he was on the way to London.

Reaching town, apparently on the evening of the fourth, the squire and parson lodged with Nathaniel Cholmley, Esq., a York friend, living at that time in Chapel Street, Mayfair. To the surprise of the two other gentlemen, Sterne was missing the next morning at breakfast. He had gone out to Dodsley's at the sign of Tully's Head in Pall Mall to test the sale of his book. On enquiry of the shopman for the works of Mr. Tristram Shandy, he was told that they "could not be had in London either for love or money." Later in the morning he saw James Dodsley himself, who readily closed with him for a second edition of *Tristram Shandy*, for two volumes more, which, it would appear, were already partially written, and for two volumes of sermons that Sterne had brought with him up to London and would be able to revise for the press within a few weeks. There was some haggling over the price by the country parson, who had had experience in buying and selling. Exclusive of the sermons, Dodsley agreed to pay the lucky author £630 on the score of *Tristram Shandy* besides the en-

tire profit on the volumes already printed.* Sterne, who was not a man to hide his candle under a bushel, let it be known what a handsome bargain he had made. Gray, Walpole, and others were astonished.¹ Some smiled, some were envious, as they saw a new dawn for the man of letters breaking over the head of Mr. Tristram Shandy. No time was wasted by Sterne and his publisher on preliminaries. In the *London Chronicle* for March 8-11, Dodsley announced that a new edition of *Tristram Shandy* would appear in a few days. Elated by his first success, Sterne further promised a fresh volume every year. After placing this mortgage on his brains for the rest of his life, he "returned to Chapell Street and came skipping into the room and said that he was the richest man in Europe."

So swift ran the current of events during the next weeks that our narrative can hardly keep up with it. On the morning of March 6, Sterne called upon "dear Mr. Garrick," and in the evening of the same day attended Drury Lane, where he was "astonished" by the great actor's performance. The play for that night was Home's *Siege of Aquileia*, in which Garrick took the part of the stubborn old Roman general who preferred the welfare of his country to the life of his sons. What occurred within the next day or two, we leave to a letter, dated March 8, to Miss Fourmantelle, still at York. Sterne

* The preliminary agreement between Sterne and Dodsley for the publication of *Tristram Shandy* is given by Melville (*Life and Letters of Laurence Sterne*, I, 205-206). It was as follows:

"It is hereby agreed between Mr. Dodsley and Mr. Sterne, that Mr. Sterne sells the Copy Right of the first and 2d Vols. of *Tristram Shandy* for the Summ of two hundred and fifty pounds—fifty pds. to be paid in hand—and that the remainder at the end of six months—Memd^m the Profits of the Books already printed to be all Mr. Sternes—the receipt of which fifty pounds I hereby acknowledge. And it is further agreed that the 3d and 4th Volumes, are to be sold and bought for the Summ of [four hundred Guineas erased] three hundred and eighty pounds.—

L. Sterne
Jas. Dodsley."

Mar. 8, 1760
Witness, Richd. Berenger.

It is a fair inference from the inclusion in the agreement of a clause concerning "the Books already printed" that Dodsley had looked after the printing of the first edition of *Tristram Shandy*, as explained earlier in this chapter.

was sitting solitary and alone in his bedchamber after returning again from the theatre, as he wrote: "I have the greatest honours paid and most civilities shewn me, that were ever known from the Great; and am engaged all ready to ten Noble Men and Men of fashion to dine. Mr. Garrick pays me all and more honour than I could look for. I dined with him to-day, and he has promised Numbers of great People to carry me to dine with 'em. He has given me an Order for the Liberty of his Boxes, and of every part of his House for the whole Season; and indeed leaves nothing undone that can do me either Service or Credit; he has undertaken the management of the Booksellers, and will procure me a great price."*

On their first meeting, Garrick told Sterne of a wild rumor in circulation that William Warburton, just elevated to the see of Gloucester, was to be introduced into the next instalment of *Tristram Shandy* as the tutor of Master Tristram. An allegory, to give the story as elaborated by the clubs, had been run up on the life of Job. Warburton was to appear as Satan, who smote the ancient patriarch from head to foot, while other well-known polemical divines—Zachary Grey, Charles Peters, and Leonard Chappelow, who had been engaged in angry disputes with Warburton, two of them on the Book of Job—were to be brought in as Job's miserable comforters. Through it all, my uncle Toby and Corporal Trim were to operate on the distinguished tutor in the way they had already done with Dr. Slop in compelling him to listen to the sermon on conscience. Sterne had apparently come to London with a half-formed plan similar to this whirling in his head. Had he stayed at home and gone on as was intended, he might have

* Sterne is reported to have told the story differently to his London friends. According to that version, Garrick at first presented him only with the freedom of the pit at Drury Lane. Meeting the actor some time later, Sterne remarked that Beard, though there was no acquaintance then between them, had offered him the freedom of the whole house over at Covent Garden. "I told him on the occasion," Sterne is made to say of Garrick, "that he *acted* great things and *did* little ones:—So he stammered and looked foolish, and performed, at length, with a bad grace, what his rival manager was so kind as to do with the best grace in the world—But no more of that—he is so complete on the stage, that I ought not to mention his patch-work off it."—*Original Letters of Laurence Sterne*, 60-61 (London, 1788).

produced a burlesque, as rich as deserved, of the vain pedantries of Warburton and his assailants. But once in London and once aware of the position Warburton held among the bishops, nothing remained for Sterne but to lay the "vile story" to the malice of his enemies. Unable to sleep because of it, Sterne wrote off, near midnight of the sixth, a hurried letter to Garrick asking for an introduction to the author—"God bless him!"—of the *Divine Legation*.

The next morning, Garrick sent a note to Warburton on the "impertinent story," and received an immediate reply from Grosvenor Square, in which the bishop expressed a desire to have the distinction of Mr. Sterne's acquaintance. At their first meeting, Sterne was pleased, one can well understand, to find that Warburton had already recommended *Tristram Shandy* to the best company in town, and defended the book in "a very grave assembly" of bishops, apparently against the attacks of Dr. Thomas Newton, the editor of Milton and soon the Bishop of Bristol. Eager to become his patron, Warburton presented Sterne, on one of his visits to Grosvenor Square, with a purse of guineas, and a bundle of books for the improvement of his style. Sterne took the guineas and kept them. He took the books also, but treated the advice that accompanied them with the contempt it deserved. No situation more humorous can easily be imagined than the dull and heavy Warburton instructing the light-hearted Yorick out of Aristotle and Longinus. So unusual was the gift of guineas that it led to a report, though there was nothing in it, that Warburton devised this way to escape becoming tutor to Mr. Tristram Shandy.

The patronage of Warburton, the friend and editor of the late Mr. Pope, as well as the champion of orthodoxy, made Sterne's brilliant reception doubly sure. Garrick could announce to the clubs that he had talked and dined with the author of *Tristram Shandy*, who was just arrived in town. He was a Yorkshire parson named Sterne, Garrick would say; the strangest sort of man he had ever met with; a bundle of contradictions, a jester and sentimental like the Yorick of the book, but withal a most agreeable gentleman, easy and affable in manners; in speech wild and reckless mostly, but at times uttering studied compliments in cleverly turned phrases, as if he had long been an adept in the art. It was Warburton's busi-

ness to make enquiries of Yorkshire clergymen in London respecting Sterne's life in the north—how he was regarded by his brethren and how he had conducted himself as vicar and prebendary. The account Warburton received of Sterne was in all respects “very advantageous.” The questionable jests in *Tristram Shandy* were clearly to be ascribed to an exuberance of wit and to the bad taste of a man who had lived out of the great world and its conventions; they were mere scratches, so to speak, upon Mr. Sterne's character, in no way penetrative of heart and brain. His conscience at ease on the score of Sterne's morals, Warburton took the author under his protection and recommended Mr. Tristram Shandy to the whole bench of bishops as “the English Rabelais.” The bishops did not know, said Horace Walpole, in commenting on the incident, what was meant by Warburton's phrase, as they had never heard of the French humorist.

From his two friends, the news that the author of *Tristram Shandy* was really in London ran like a flame through society. With a view to impending social demands, Sterne left Cholmley's on the eighth of March; and after looking over Piccadilly and the Haymarket, moved into commodious lodgings at the second house in St. Alban's Street, now no more, just off Pall Mall. Stephen Croft, having finished his business, soon returned into Yorkshire, while Sterne remained to reap the personal delight of his fame. The new apartments, near Dodsley's shop and in the very heart of fashion, became the centre of extraordinary scenes. “From Morning to night,” Sterne wrote to Miss Fourmantelle, “my Lodgings, which by the by, are the genteest in Town, are full of the greatest Company. I dined these two days with two ladies of the Bedchamber; then with Lord Rockingham, Lord Edgecomb, Lord Winchelsea, Lord Littleton, a Bishop, &c., &c. I assure you, my Kitty, that *Tristram* is the Fashion.” And again, with additional details, his head still topsy-turvy: “My Lodging is every hour full of your Great People of the first Rank, who strive who shall most honour me:—even all the Bishops have sent their Compliments to me, and I set out on Monday Morning to pay my Visits to them all. I am to dine with Lord Chesterfield this Week, &c. &c., and next Sunday Lord Rockingham takes me to Court. I have snatch'd this single moment, tho'

there is company in my rooms, to tell my dear, dear, dear Kitty this, and that I am hers for ever and ever."

And so it went on to the end of the season. Every morning for two months Sterne's rooms were thronged with politicians, courtiers, and men of fashion; and every evening Sterne was hurried off his legs in going to these great people. It was most fitting that Rockingham, the future Prime Minister, should have led the way in honoring the Yorkshire author. At that time Rockingham was Lord-Lieutenant of the North and East Ridings and Vice-Admiral of Yorkshire, with a seat at Malton, not far from Sterne's livings. Since the Marquis and Marchioness of Rockingham were regular subscribers to the Assembly Rooms, where Miss Fourmantelle had sung, Sterne must have been acquainted with both of them long before coming to London. Winchelsea, related to Rockingham by blood, was First Lord of the Admiralty. "Dick" Edgcumbe, wit and Privy Councillor, it may be conjectured, first brought together Sterne and Sir Joshua Reynolds. Two of the men of rank who overwhelmed the author with attentions were patrons of literature. Chesterfield, his political days long over, had retired to his luxurious house and garden in Mayfair, to devote himself to literature and the entertainment of his friends. Lyttelton had been the companion of Pope, Thomson, and Fielding, who dedicated to him *Tom Jones*, and never tired of praising his generosity, talents, and large fund of learning.

Of the associations that were linking Sterne through Lyttelton and Chesterfield to the great names of a past age, none pleased him quite so much as the singular manner in which Lord Bathurst sought him out at Carlton House a few weeks later. Sterne never forgot that distinction. "He came up to me," said Sterne long after, "one day, as I was at the Princess of Wales's court. 'I want to know you, Mr. Sterne; but it is fit you should know, also, who it is that wishes this pleasure. You have heard, continued he, of an old Lord Bathurst, of whom your Popes and Swifts have sung and spoken so much; I have lived my life with geniuses of that cast; but have survived them; and, despairing ever to find their equals, it is some years since I have closed my accounts, and shut up my books, with thoughts of never opening them again; but you have

kindled a desire in me of opening them once more before I die; which I now do; so go home and dine with me.'"

It was in truth as fine a compliment as could be paid to genius. The aged peer, who had been the patron and protector of two generations of literary men, was dying in despair of ever meeting their equals again. He saw Sterne, ordered his table spread again, and resolved to live once more.

Amid these honors came that preferment in the Church which Sterne had missed ten years before. He had been disappointed, one may remember, when Coxwold went to his former curate, Richard Wilkinson, owing, it seemed quite clear, to the opposition of his uncle and the Archbishop of York. Since then Dr. Sterne had died and a new archbishop was on the throne. On the tenth of March died also the incumbent of Coxwold, most unexpectedly, for he was still a young man. Within a few days after the news reached London, Lord Fauconberg, then at Court, nominated Sterne, on the solicitation of Stephen Croft, to the vacant living, then estimated at £160 a year above the customary dues; and on March 29, Archbishop Gilbert, who was passing the winter at his house in Grosvenor Square near Warburton's, completed the appointment. By this act all of Sterne's sorrows and tears were "wiped away." There was nothing more that he could "wish or want in this world."

Near the same time, Sterne was painted in his clerical gown by Sir Joshua Reynolds, at the request of Lord Ossory. The painting afterwards passed to Lord Holland, and at his death to the splendid gallery of the Marquis of Lansdowne. It is a marvellous portrait in pose and feature. As if already fatigued by three weeks of dinners, Sterne, say Reynolds's biographers, propped himself up while sitting to the great painter; and his wig contriving to get a little to one side, Sir Joshua, with the insight of genius, readily took advantage of the accident and painted it so, giving the head the true Shandean air upon which Sterne prided himself. The face, pale and thin, as one would have it, is all intelligence and humor. Reynolds, glad to confront the lion of the hour alone and face to face, would accept no fee. The portrait was at once placed in the hands of Ravenet, who made a mezzotint worthy of the original. With reference to it all, Sterne wrote, his thought on a full purse:

"There is a fine print going to be done of me, so I shall make the most of myself and sell both inside and out."*

In the meantime, Dodsley was hastening forward the second edition of *Tristram Shandy*. At Garrick's table, Sterne had sat with Richard Berenger, gentleman of his Majesty's horse, a man of charming mind and manners conjoined with the gayer vices of the age; a sort of Hall-Stevenson bred to the city instead of to the country. To Dr. Johnson he was "the standard of ideal elegance," and Hannah More thought him "all chivalry, blank verse, and anecdote." He bade Garrick's guest tell him all his wants while in London, and he would fulfil them. Taking him at his word, Sterne addressed to him, as the day for the new edition of *Tristram Shandy* was approaching, a wild, profane letter beginning: "You bid me tell you all my Wants—What the Devil in Hell can the fellow want now? . . . The Vanity of [a] pretty Girl in the Heyday of her Roses and Lillies, is a fool to that of Author of my Stamp." This reckless outpour of speech was but preliminary to an urgent request that Mr. Berenger, "an impudent, honest dog," should sally out to Leicester Fields and demand of Mr. Hogarth "ten strokes" of his "witty Chisel to clap at the Front" of the coming *Tristram Shandy*. Hogarth sent back, free of charge, Trim reading the sermon on conscience in the back parlor of Shandy Hall before Dr. Slop and the two brothers. It was a scene that Sterne himself chose as the best for transmitting Hogarth and himself together, hand in hand, down to futurity.

It had been, according to John Croft, Sterne's idea, when first writing his book, to dedicate it to "Mr. Pitt, then Secre-

* The statement, many times repeated, that Reynolds painted Sterne at one sitting is quite erroneous. As shown by Reynolds's *Pocket Book* of appointments (MS. now in possession of the Royal Academy of Arts), there were eight sittings: the first on March 20 and the last on April 21.

The famous portrait is carefully described by Graves and Cronin in *A History of the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, III, 933-934 (London, 1899):

"Three-quarter length, canvas 50x40 in. . . . Sitting in a wig and gown; right elbow on a table, forefinger to forehead; left arm bent, hand to hip; knee breeches; on table are papers—on one, 'J. Reynolds, pinxt 1760'—and inkstand; a ring on the little finger of the left hand."

tary of State, that it might lay in his parlour window, and amuse him after the fatigues of business as a lounging book." Thinking, doubtless, that a dedication from a humble clergyman to the Great Commoner might seem impertinent, Sterne abandoned the notion and satisfied himself with a mock epistle to "any one Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount, or Baron in these his Majesty's dominions," who would pay fifty guineas for the honor. Though still unacquainted with Pitt, Sterne could now have no hesitation, for he felt himself the equal of any minister of state. On the twenty-eighth of March, he sent his dedication over to Pitt with a brief note, not exactly asking his approval so much as taking it for granted that there could be no offence.

On the third of April, within a month after Sterne had set foot in London, appeared the new edition of *Tristram Shandy*, bearing the old title-page down through the sentence from Epictetus to the addition:

"The SECOND EDITION.

"London:

"Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY in Pall Mall.

"M.DCC.LX."

All copies had, I think, the frontispiece by Hogarth, which Ravenet engraved for Dodsley, and most, though not all, of them contained the handsome tribute "To the Right Honourable Mr. Pitt," preceded by a paragraph on the circumstances under which the book had been written in "a bye corner of the kingdom, and in a retired thatch'd house." There the author had lived, it was prettily said, "in a constant endeavour to fence against the infirmities of ill health, and other evils of life, by mirth; being firmly persuaded that every time a man smiles,—but much more so, when he laughs, it adds something to this Fragment of Life."

The second edition barely satisfied the market for the remnant of the season. Before the end of the year, Dodsley reprinted it twice again, making in all four editions within a twelvemonth, to say nothing of several piracies. As his book became more widely known, the adulation of Sterne went on at a quicker pace than ever. "Tristram Shandy," the poet Gray

wrote to Thomas Wharton on April 22, "is still a greater object of admiration, the man as well as the book. One is invited to dinner, where he dines, a fortnight beforehand." "*Dinners for a month to come*" was John Croft's estimate, so that "it allmost amounted to a Parliamentary interest to have his company at any rate."

Giddy with these attentions, Sterne urged Miss Fourmantelle to return to London and share with him the closing weeks of his triumph. Obedient to Yorick's call, she reached town by the middle of April and took lodgings in Meard's Court, Soho, within the district of balls, concerts, and masquerades. Sterne quickly saw that he had made a grave mistake in his thoughtlessness. He might hold in the abstract that prudence and discretion are only vices misnamed virtues; but the intimate friend of Garrick and Warburton could not take Kitty, in face of all the world, to the theatre or other places of amusement, however much she may have set her heart upon going with him; he could only send her tickets, with the hope that she would use them for herself and her friends. With great difficulty he contrived even to visit her for afternoon tea or for a sentimental evening; and before many days, numerous engagements to others so pressed upon him that he forgot all his appointed hours with her. On a Wednesday he sent her a note explaining why he had not called since Sunday and putting off an engagement until Friday. Five days without seeing the woman whom he had promised to make his wife, should God "open a dore," and to love forever and ever! "Dear Kitty" could not compete, I fear, with the ladies of her Majesty's bedchamber. So Sterne sent in his excuses for neglect and took his leave of her. His last letter, making a last appointment with her, runs as follows:

"Dear Kitty,—If it would have saved my Life, I have not had one hour or half hour in my power since I saw you on Sunday—else my dear Kitty may be sure I should not have been thus absent. Every minute of this day and to-morrow is pre-engaged, that I am as much a Prisoner as if I was in Jayl—I beg, dear girl, you will believe I do not spend an hour where I wish—for I wish to be with you always: but fate orders my steps, God knows how for the present.—Adieu! Adieu! On Friday at 2 o'clock, I will see you."

There was an epilogue to the sentimental comedy. On coming back to London, Miss Fourmantelle had tried to make an engagement at Ranelagh. But unaided she had failed. Then, towards the close of the season, Sterne persuaded John Beard, who was acting as manager of Covent Garden Theatre and also sang at Ranelagh, to take her into his company. The inducement was "a kind of Shandean sing-song, dramatic piece of rhyme," which Sterne, one day while at Garrick's house, wrote out for Beard and Kitty to sing together as "Swain" and "Nymph." Coming from Sterne, or, as rumor first had it, from Garrick, "the musical dialogue" awakened some curiosity. As Sterne's sole attempt, so far as is known, to write for the stage, the verses may be given in full here—not surely for any intrinsic merits, though they have the lilt of a song in the *Beggar's Opera*, of which it is an imitation:

Swain.

How imperfect the Joys of the Soul,
 How insipid Life's Journey must be,
 How unsocial the Seasons must roll,
 To the Wretches who dare not be free.

Nymph.

Ev'ry Youth loyal Courage can fire,
 To the fair kind and constant must prove;
 British Maids shall their Merit admire,
 And reward them with Beauty and Love.

Duetto.

Blooming Plenty shall Smile on our Fields,
 Sweet Contentment shall prompt us to sing:
 And our own be what Industry yields,
 Long as George, gracious George is our King.

Swain.

Nought but Liberty Life can refine;
 'Tis the Wreath with which England is crown'd;
 See we're bless'd with the Oak and the Vine,
 And we drain the Bowl all the Year round.

Nymph.

Oh, may Honor glow bright in each breast,
 And the faithless may Infamy brand,
 To the Nation they always are best
 Who are true to the Nymphs of the Land.

Duetto: Blooming Plenty . . .

Swain.

Let us wake when our Genius inspires,
 Let no Follies our Virtue enslave;
 Let us prove ourselves great as our Sires,
 And rise Britons as glorious as brave.

Nymph.

Let the Sons of Britannia proceed,
 Let them rouse up revenge if they dare;
 Still we've Heroes enough that will bleed
 For their Country their King and the Fair.

*Duetto: Blooming Plenty . . .**

Nothing more is heard of Miss Fourmantelle after her performance with Mr. Beard. She drifted away through concert halls nobody knows whither, but her image haunted Sterne's imagination down to the days when he felt death pressing upon him, and he then wondered how that face might look now that the beautiful singer was somewhere growing old.

How Sterne bore himself among the great people whither fate called him away from dear Kitty and what they thought of him, were told in the April number of the *Royal Female Magazine*, issued on the first of May. The account was immediately copied into nearly all of the London newspapers. A notice so extended as this was rare in the press of the eighteenth century, even on the death of men conspicuous in church and state. Sterne was in truth our first writer about whom people cared much to know—how he lived, how he looked, and what he said and did when among his friends. The man

* Dialogue. Sung by Mr. Beard and Miss Fromantel. In *A Collection of New Songs sung by Mr. Beard, Miss Stevenson, and Miss Fromantel at Ranelagh, 21 et seq* (London, 1760?).

who attempted to inform them was Dr. John Hill, a literary hack and quack-doctor, celebrated for an "elixir of Bardana" and various other nostrums, "excellent beyond parallel." To his purpose, the physician gathered up anecdotes running through the London clubs; and in addition to this, he must have had recourse to a friend of the author—perhaps Nathaniel Cholmley of Chapel Street—for details of Sterne's career in the north. There was in fact a hint abroad that Sterne himself furnished the material.

As is evident at a glance, the brief biography that Dr. Hill wrote for the *Royal Female Magazine* contains several inaccuracies, but its general truth is beyond contradiction. It would be a mistake to imagine Sterne as an awkward and unpolished country parson who had spent his time in the cultivation of his glebe, though he had indeed been engaged in that. He was a gentleman by birth who had been bred at the university; and he had been the associate of gentlemen all his life. His transition to London society was thus not so abrupt as it might seem, abrupt though it was. Notwithstanding many oddities, there was grace, native and acquired, in his manners, so that he adjusted himself to his new surroundings with the greatest ease. "I think," said Dr. Hill, "he is the only man, of whom many speak well, and of whom no body speaks ill. . . . Every body is curious to see the author; and, when they see him, every body loves the man. There is a pleasantry in his conversation that always pleases; and a goodness in his heart, which adds the greater tribute of esteem. Many have wit; but there is a peculiar merit in giving variety. This most agreeable joker can raise it from any subject; for he seems to have studied all; and can suit it to his company; the depth of whose understandings he very quickly fathoms."

The humorist's ability to please by his smart jests and repartees, was slightly qualified by John Croft, who wrote of him: "Sterne was best and shewed himself to most advantage in a small company, for in a large one he was frequently at a loss and dumb-founded. . . . He wou'd frequently come out with very silly things and expressions, which if they did not meet that share of approbation from the publick which he expected, he wou'd be very angry and even affrontive." Started by Dr. Hill, a story went through the newspapers of a sharp

encounter between Sterne and Dr. Messenger Monsey, long chief physician to the Whig politicians; a learned and skilful man, but ostentatious and otherwise disagreeable in his behavior. The incident created so great a stir among Dr. Monsey's friends, including Garrick, that Sterne was compelled to soften some of the details, but he could not deny the main facts. In a letter to Stephen Croft, he claimed that Dr. Hill had made a mistake in the physician and in the place where the encounter occurred. Be this as it may, Sterne silenced the man across the table, to the delight of the other guests:

"At the last dinner," says the tale as originally told, "that the late lost amiable Charles Stanhope*" gave to Genius, Yorick was present. The good old man was vexed to see a pedantic medicine monger take the lead, and prevent that pleasantry, which good wit and good wine might have occasioned, by a discourse in the unintelligible language of his profession, concerning the difference between the phrenitis, and the para-phrenitis, and the concommitant categories of the mediastinum and pleura.

"Good-humour'd Yorick saw the sense of the master of the feast, and fell into the cant and jargon of physic, as if he had been one of Radcliffe's travellers. 'The vulgar practice,' says he, 'savour too much of mechanical principles; the venerable ancients were all empirics, and the profession will never regain its ancient credit, till practice falls into the old tract again. I am myself an instance; I caught cold by leaning on a damp cushion, and, after sneezing and sniveling a fortnight, it fell upon my breast: they bled me, blistered me, and gave me robs and bobs, and lobocks, and eclegmeta; but I grew worse: for I was treated according to the exact rules of the college. In short, from an inflammation it came to an ADHESION, and all was over with me. They advised me to Bristol, that I might not do them the scandal of dying under their hands; and the Bristol people, for the same reason, consigned me over to Lisbon. But what do I? why, I considered an adhesion is, in plain English, only a sticking of two things together, and that force enough would pull them asunder. I bought a good ash-pole, and began leaping over all the walls and ditches in the country. From the height of the pole I used

* Charles Stanhope died at the age of eighty-seven, March 17, 1760.

to come souce down upon my feet, like an ass when he tramples upon a bull-dog: but it did not do. At last, when I had raised myself perpendicularly over a wall, I used to fall exactly across the ridge of it, upon the side opposite to the adhesion. This tore it off at once, and I am as you see. Come fill a glass to the prosperity of the empiric medicine.' ”

By the first of May, Sterne, all worn out and jaded, began to turn his thoughts towards home. In his absence, Stephen Croft had looked after the welfare of his wife and daughter, supplying them with guineas and charging them up to Sterne. Lydia was getting on well at school, though she had been annoyed by being called Miss Tristram and Miss Shandy. Mrs. Sterne was mending so that there could be on her husband's part no further serious thought of Miss Fourmantelle for a second wife. York had been kept posted of Sterne's extraordinary reception by letters from Cholmley to his friend at Stillington Hall. The anecdotes related by Dr. Hill also came down with the *Royal Female Magazine*, regularly taken at York, where they caused some hostile comment, since they touched on local affairs as well as on Sterne's courses in London. The behavior of Sterne at dinner with the London physicians was regarded as undignified; and the rumor that he was going to ridicule Warburton, after accepting a purse of guineas from him, disturbed the clergy, for they remembered the *Watch-Coat*. Sterne naturally wished to see his family, to set matters right, and to take up his preferment.

Several causes for delay, however, intervened. It was most difficult for Sterne to withstand the pressure of friends to stay on to the end of the month. At this time he was receiving "great notice" from Prince Edward, just created Duke of York. This royal scion, brother of the Prince of Wales, soon to become king, was a good-humored young man who gave himself up to pleasure and all manner of social functions. He had a tongue, says Walpole, that ran like a fiddlestick. Some years later he passed over to the south of France, and died there in consequence of cold and fever caught by dancing all night. Sterne supped with the Duke of York, and followed him to fashionable concerts where he was expected to perform. There yet remained, too, the final honor of all the honors that had been lavished on Sterne. He was invited to Windsor. On the

sixth of May, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, who had won the battle of Minden the year before, was to be installed—in the proxy of Sir Charles Cottrell Dormer—Knight of the Garter, along with Earl Temple, then Lord Privy Seal, and the Marquis of Rockingham, who, as said once before, had taken the Yorkshire author under his especial protection. Nearly a week was consumed by the journey to Windsor, the installation, and miscellaneous festivities. The grand procession set out from London with Sterne in the suite of Lord Rockingham. It was a gorgeous scene in Saint George's Chapel on the next day when the investiture of surcoat, belt, and sword took place in accordance with the impressive rites peculiar to this ancient order of chivalry. From the chapel the knights with their retinues moved to the great guard-chamber, where a dinner was served, says Sterne, at a cost of fourteen hundred pounds. Before the second course, Garter King-at-Arms, attended by his knight-companions, entered the hall and proclaimed the styles of Earl Temple and the Marquis of Rockingham. At night there was "a magnificent ball and supper"; and on the next morning the newly elected knights and "the Right Hon. Mr. Secretary Pitt" were granted the freedom of the borough of Windsor. Sterne, then, if never before, met the great statesman to whom he had dedicated *Tristram Shandy*.

On returning to London with Lord Rockingham, Sterne had still many engagements to clear off his books, two volumes of sermons to watch in their last stage through the press, and the final contract to sign with Dodsley. In place of the single preliminary agreement of March 8, there were now two instruments, each dated May 19, 1760. According to the one, Sterne was to receive £450 for the sermons and the second edition of the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*; according to the other, Dodsley agreed, as in March, to pay him £380 for two more volumes of *Tristram Shandy* six months after publication.* In all £830! With a part of the money already paid in, Sterne purchased a carriage and a pair of horses that he might drive down into Yorkshire "in a superior style." He set out, if he followed his plans of a week before, on Monday, the twenty-sixth, that he might surely be in York

* *Willis's Current Notes*, IV, 91 (November, 1854).

on the next Sunday to preach in the minster before the judges of the summer session. Here in the great cathedral ended his triumph.

In beginning the story of how the Yorkshire parson came into his fame, I said that it would read like romance. To Sterne himself, it seemed all a dream; for writing to a friend of his sojourn in London, he said: "I was lost all the time I was there, and never found till I got to this Shandy-castle of mine." On that March morning when Stephen Croft by merest chance fell in with him at York, the author of *Tristram Shandy* was a poor and obscure country parson without the means of a journey to London. He was to be "franked" up and back by the squire of Stillington. Within three months he returned in his own carriage and driving his own horses, the best that could be procured. Six weeks at York and Sutton, and he was settled in his new parish. No man was better known in all England. A wager was laid in a company of London wits that a letter addressed "Tristram Shandy, Europe," would reach the popular author. The letter, says John Croft, duly reached York, and "the post boy, meeting Sterne on the road to Sutton, pulled off his hatt and gave it him."

A "curious cub" from Scotland, named James Boswell, who appears to have met Sterne in the Duke of York's company, thought Yorick "the best companion" he had ever known. The young Scot, who had not yet found his man in Dr. Johnson, looked on the scene of Sterne's progress, and as he looked, saw with wonder a country parson change—alter—and at length pass, by a perfect transformation, into a complete gentleman of the town.*

* F. A. Pottle, *Boozzy and Yorick*, in *Blackwood's Magazine*, March, 1925.

C H A P. IX.

The Sermons of Mr. Yorick. May and June, 1760

LOOKED at in other lights, the visit to London loses some of its brilliant hues. A successful author must expect many annoyances, alike from the friends and from the enemies that his books are sure to make; but Sterne perhaps encountered more than any other of his century, if we except Pope. The art, the jests, and the personal character of Mr. Tristram Shandy were all themes for censure as well as for praise. A persisting source of irritation to Sterne was the sketch which "Bardana" Hill drew of him for the newspapers. It had been written with kindly intentions merely for the sake of a guinea or two; but Sterne, unaccustomed as he was to anecdotes and chit-chat about himself, half-truths and half-lies, magnified the good-natured article into a malicious attack upon his honor as a gentleman. For a man so proud of his ancestry as was Sterne, it nettled him, first of all, to be told that he was "born of the barracks." Again, the incumbent of Coxwold had died, leaving, like Trollope's Rev. Mr. Quiverful, as his only estate a poor widow with unnumbered children. A report, coming into print with Dr. Hill, went current that Sterne had promised the destitute woman a hundred pounds outright and a liberal pension. Disclaim it as often as he would, the rumor pursued him through Yorkshire to his perpetual embarrassment; for had he wished to perform the charity, his means would not have allowed it.

Likewise the story that immunity from satire had cost Warburton a purse of guineas could not be laid for all his efforts. Sterne might set it down as a lie; but when it was again put into circulation by Dr. Hill, everybody had it and many believed it. Indeed, Warburton, despite the gift, was trembling for what might happen in the next instalment of *Tristram Shandy*. Add to this the indiscreet conduct of Hall-Stevenson. Sterne had been in London but a few weeks when his friend, assuming the name of "Antony Shandy," greeted him with *Two Lyric Epistles*; of which one was addressed "to my

Cousin Shandy on his Coming to Town"; while the other was in honor of "the Grown Gentlewomen, the Misses of * * * *"; that is, the Misses of York. It was not a squeamish age. "Fine ladies" as well as "fine gentlemen" repeated and laughed at jests and stories coarser than any in the collection of Mr. Tristram Shandy; but Hall-Stevenson went rather beyond the relish of well-bred people of either sex; and Sterne was held responsible for his cousin Antony's offence against this better public taste. Though that was not quite just, he nevertheless had read the epistles in manuscript, showing them to his acquaintance, and had permitted them to go to Dodsley's press, after striking out a stanza here and there. Over these puerile verses, discreditable alike to all who had a hand in them, the friendship between Sterne and Warburton was strained near to the breaking-point. Sterne's full confession and penitence barely saved him.

But Hall-Stevenson and Dr. Hill were only the beginning of Sterne's troubles. Six weeks in London, and all Grub Street broke loose at his heels. On its first appearance, the reviewers for the leading monthlies had accepted, we have seen, *Tristram Shandy* as a book of unusual wit when compared with the humorous trash then coming from the press. They did not know at the time that the author was a clergyman, deserving to be unfrocked for playing the part of a king's jester. Their favorable opinion once delivered, they remained silent on the reissue of *Tristram Shandy*, except for casual reference to it, though they were but lying in wait for an opportune moment to attack. For a time the newspapers, whose printers, or editors as we should now call them, took no pains to form an independent estimate, merely reflected the magazines; but towards the end of April, after the second edition of *Shandy* was out, they opened fire. On April 28, the *Public Ledger*, to cite one instance, published the first of a short series of imaginary letters from Mr. Tristram Shandy to his friend Bob Busby, in which the young man claimed, in opposition to Sterne, that he had been regularly born, and appealed to Dr. Slop in proof of it.

The merriment once begun, someone calling himself a Quaker by name Ebenezer Plain-Cloth, sent a letter to the editor in protest against the intrusion into public prints of "the frontless face" of Tristram Shandy. This is a specimen

of what Sterne might see on taking up a newspaper at any time for the rest of his life. Scribblers who required larger scope for their wit resorted to shilling pamphlets running from forty to a hundred pages or more. Some of these pamphleteers adopted an abusive tone, wildly charging Sterne with various social and literary vices; while others imitated or burlesqued his book solely in the hope of making a few shillings out of its popularity. Of Sterne the man they knew nothing and cared nothing one way or the other. On reading the first of these lucubrations, Sterne remarked in a letter from London to Stephen Croft: "There is a shilling pamphlet wrote against Tristram—I wish they would write a hundred such." But as one mill after another took to grinding out *Shandys*, Sterne grew uneasy. "The scribblers," he began to complain, "use me ill, but they have used my betters much worse, for which may God forgive them." Finally, his nerves all shattered by three months of social dissipation, he fell into a semi-insane delusion, just as had occurred in the quarrel with his uncle, that a host of "profligate wretches" were setting upon him in the dark "with cuffs, kicks, and bastinadoes," that they might kill him with the public. In one of these moods he wrote to Warburton near the middle of June: "I wish from my heart I had never set pen to paper, but continued hid in the quiet obscurity in which I had so long lived; I was quiet, for I was below envy and yet above want."

Heaven forbid that we should go far into the pamphlets which so worked upon Sterne that he was on the point of renouncing authorship, though the narrative might not be without entertainment. "God forgive me," he wrote to Miss Macartney, afterwards Lady Lyttelton, "God forgive me for the volumes of ribaldry I've been the cause of."

The pamphlet which Sterne wished, on first perusal, multiplied a hundred-fold was *The Clockmaker's Outcry against the Author of the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. According to the fiction of the elaborate jest, a number of London clockmakers, meeting casually at their club, fall foul of the notorious clock scene at the opening of Sterne's first volume. One of the members, indignant beyond the rest at the humorist's treatment of an honorable trade, takes up *Tristram Shandy*, incident by incident, and denounces all, even

the death of poor Yorick, which, though praised for its pathos, is declared to be "intirely borrowed." Some one of the company, if I remember correctly, ventured to put in a word in favor of the clever "scale of beauty" which Mr. Shandy applied to his mock dedication to any lord who would pay for it. Swift came the retort from the interrupted speaker to the effect that nobody should be so ignorant as not to know that the scale was stolen from the ingenious Mr. Spence's *Crito, or Dialogue on Beauty*.* As a whole, *Tristram Shandy* was pronounced to be nothing more than an imitation of *A Tale of a Tub*. Only there is this striking difference: Swift's wit is never without aim, while Sterne drifts on helplessly from one poor jest to another still poorer until he reaches insanity. In concluding his discourse, the angry clockmaker charged Sterne with the ruin of his business by degrading a harmless and necessary piece of furniture. "The directions," he complained, "that I had for making several clocks for the country, are now countermanded; because no modest lady dares to mention a word about winding up a clock, without exposing herself to the . . . jokes of the family. . . . Alas, reputable, hoary clocks, that have flourished for ages are ordered to be taken down by virtuous Matrons and disposed of as . . . lumber." The whimsical pamphlet bore an ironical dedication to "the humblest of Christian prelates," that is, to the ostentatious Warburton, who was taken to task for abetting Sterne's crime against society.

About this time issued from another press *Explanatory Remarks upon the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy; wherein the Morals and Politics of the Piece are clearly laid open*, by one who claimed to be the son of the physician whom Sterne had ridiculed in his seventh chapter. The brochure, which need not be described here, closed with an "Advertisement to the Nobility and Gentry of all Europe," containing some good raillery of Sterne's great reception. "As I expect," says the author, "in consequence of the foregoing work, to receive invitations on every hand for parties of pleasure, regales, dinners, and suppers—in order to prevent confusion in my engagements, and that I may not make appointments

* So it was. See Spence, *Fugitive Pieces on Various Subjects*, I, 43-45 (third edition, London, 1771).

with persons I am intirely ignorant of, I beg the world, with all convenient despatch, send their titles, names, and places of abodes, with cards to my bookseller's, that I may pay compliments to them, according to their different ranks; or, where upon a footing, according to their alphabetical succession. N. B. Such noblemen, &c. as chuse to give me testimony of their approbation of this book, by particular marks of their beneficence, will please to take notice, that no *living*, however lucrative, can be accepted as I am not in orders."

After these two pamphlets came the deluge: *The Life and Opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy*, which cost two shillings or double the usual price; *Tristram Shandy at Ranelagh*, a miserable performance; *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie*, "printed on the same Size as Tristram Shandy and very proper to be bound with it," containing a *littera infernalis* from the departed Yorick to his admirers on earth; *Letter from a Methodist Preacher to Mr. Sterne*; *Letter from the Rev. George Whitfield, B.A., to the Rev. Laurence Sterne, M.A.*; *The Cream of Jest, or The Wits Outwitted . . . being an entire new Collection of droll Wit and Humour*, written and collected by *Corporal Trim during his Travels with Mr. Tobias Shandy, etc. etc.* Something better than any in this list was *Yorick's Meditations upon Various Interesting and Important Subjects, . . . upon Nothing, upon Tobacco, upon Noses, upon the Man in the Moon, etc.*, for several reviewers took it to be really Yorick's, and the author of the tract received sufficient encouragement from the public to proceed with *A Supplement to the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, "the best ape," said the *London Magazine*, "of the original Shandy we have yet seen."

A more elaborate continuation of *Tristram Shandy* appeared in September from the pen of one John Carr, the translator of Lucian, and then or afterwards head-master of the Hertford grammar school. It seemed to the schoolmaster that it was time for Tristram to be born, and so he brought him into the world. Carr attempted to pass off his book as a genuine third volume of *Tristram Shandy*, but the critics quickly detected the fraud. From these and similar burlesques, criticisms, and forgeries, with which the London booksellers flooded the town, Sterne could find no escape even in his Yorkshire re-

treat. If he looked into a London or a local newspaper, there they were all advertised; if he strolled into a bookstall at York, there they stared him full in the face. All this trash and abuse suggested, however, to an unknown wit a practical jest that diverted Yorick exceedingly when he heard of it some years later; and when it was related to Dr. Johnson, it brought forth a rhinoceros laugh. A certain gentleman, asking a friend to lend him an amusing book from his private library, was recommended to try *Hermes*, a dry and technical treatise on universal grammar by the learned James Harris. "The gentleman from the title," so the anecdote goes, "conceived it to be a novel, but turning it over and over, could make nothing out of it, and at last coldly returned it with thanks. His friend asked him how he had been entertained. 'Not much,' he replied, 'he thought that all these imitations of *Tristram Shandy* fell far short of the original.' "*

To have done with the scribblers who pestered Sterne with tags to his book, it is noticeable that he saw few men of letters while in London. The people who left their cards at the genteel rooms in St. Alban's Street and invited the popular author to their tables, necessarily lay outside the realm of literature, except for a patronizing nobleman here and there, like Bathurst and Lyttelton. The men who were earning an honest living by their pens could afford of course no elaborate dinners; yet some of them might have made Sterne's acquaintance, had they so desired. A compliment to *Rasselas* in *Tristram Shandy* was an open bid for the friendship of Dr. Johnson; but Garrick never brought the two men together. And when they did meet more than a year later, it was with a clash of arms. Dr. Johnson and the rest were content to watch Sterne's progress through the mansions of the great and to make their comments thereon, occasionally in praise but more often in blame. For all the attentions lavished on him by rank and wealth, Sterne did not stand very well the test of the best critical opinion. Though he could not have known just what was being said of him in private companies and in the literary correspondence of the year, he was yet aware of a very hostile undercurrent. So in

* Joseph Cradock, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, I, 207-208 (London, 1826); and G. B. Hill, *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II, 70-71 (London, 1897).

his sober moments, he was accustomed to liken himself, when complimented upon his prodigious run, to a fashionable mistress, whom everybody is courting because it is the fashion; but let a few weeks pass, and she will in vain "solicit Corporal Stare for a dinner."

It was not quite so bad as Sterne would make out. Thomas Wharton, then at Old Park, near Durham, wrote to the poet Gray in praise of *Tristram Shandy*, and the Cambridge recluse said in reply: "There is much good fun in it, and humour sometimes hit and sometimes missed. I agree with your opinion of it and shall see the future volumes with pleasure."* On the other hand, Horace Walpole, in giving Sir David Dalrymple of Edinburgh the literary news of the month, took occasion to say: "At present, nothing is talked of, nothing admired, but what I cannot help calling a very insipid and tedious performance: it is a kind of novel, called *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*; the great humour of which consists in the whole narration always going backwards. I can conceive a man saying that it would be droll to write a book in that manner, but have no notion of his persevering in executing it. It makes one smile two or three times at the beginning, but in recompense makes one yawn for two hours."† "A fashionable thing," Walpole called *Shandy* in sending a parcel of books to Horace Mann at Florence; and when he fell in with Sterne a few years later at Paris, he found the man's talk as tiresome as his writings. In neither, he said, was there anything to raise a laugh, though one were in a mood for laughter.

Of men of letters, Goldsmith almost alone spoke out in print against *Tristram Shandy*. Not yet author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, he was then contributing to the *Public Ledger* his *Chinese Letters*, since known as the *Citizen of the World*. Between Sterne and Goldsmith as they appear to-day, one is impressed more by real similarities than by surface differences. Goethe, everybody knows, coupled the two names, in order to say that their genial humor and sane philosophy of life more than all else rescued him from Wertherian despair. But Gold-

* Letter to Wharton, July, 1760, in *Works of Thomas Gray*, edited by E. Gosse, III, 53 (London, 1885).

† Letter to Dalrymple, April 4, 1760, in *Letters of Horace Walpole*, edited by Mrs. Paget Toynbee, IV, 369 (Oxford, 1903).

smith, all form, disliked the broken style of Sterne; and his imagination, immaculate as a maid's, could not endure Sterne's salacious wit. And so gathering up what gall there was in his white liver, he poured it forth on *Tristram Shandy* in his newspaper for June 30, and in subsequent issues.* From him came also the *Ledger's* imaginary letters to which we have previously referred. "I bought last season," said a London bookseller to Goldsmith's Chinaman, "a piece that had no other merit upon earth than nine hundred and ninety-five breaks, seventy-two ha ha's, three good things, and a garter. And yet it played off, and bounced, and cracked, and made more sport than a fire-work. . . . Ah, sir, that was a piece touched off by the hand of a master, filled with good things from one end to the other. The author had nothing but the jest in view; no dull moral lurking beneath, nor ill-natured satire to sour the reader's good-humour; he wisely considered, that moral and humour at the same time were quite overdoing the business." At this point the visiting Oriental asked why such a book was published; and he quickly received the reply: "Sir, the book was published in order to be sold; and no book sold better, except the criticisms upon it, which came out soon after."

Sterne had revived, it was more directly alleged by Goldsmith, two obsolete forms of humor not much practised since Tom D'Urfey and his wretched crew. They may be called "bawdry and pertness," and "they are of such a nature, that the merest blockhead, by a proper use of them, shall have the reputation of a wit: they lie level to the meanest capacities, and address those passions which all have, or would be ashamed to disown." And finally of Sterne's vanity: "He must talk in riddles. . . . He must speak of himself, and his chapters, and his manner, and what he would be at, and his own importance, and his mother's importance, with the most unpitying prolixity; now and then testifying his contempt for all but himself, smiling without a jest, and without wit professing vivacity."

Dr. Johnson, much as he despised *Tristram Shandy*, thought Goldsmith went too far in writing the author down a blockhead, though he had himself called Fielding a blockhead. Not

* For example, the *Public Ledger*, September 17, 1760.

this year, but with reference to another and similar season, Johnson remarked to Goldsmith one day: "The man, Sterne, I have been told, has had engagements for three months." "And a very dull fellow," added Goldsmith. "Why, no, Sir," replied Johnson, and the conversation ended.*

Strict moralists of narrower outlook than Dr. Johnson were enraged at Sterne's performance. Richard Farmer, than classical tutor at Cambridge, spoke sharply to a company of students who in the very parlor of Emmanuel were expressing admiration of *Tristram Shandy*. "Mark my words," was his solemn prophecy, "and remember what I say to you; however much it may be talked about at present, yet, depend upon it, in the course of twenty years, should any one wish to refer to the book in question, he will be obliged to go to an antiquary to inquire for it."† Another storm centre was Delville House overlooking the harbor of Dublin, the residence of Mary Granville the Bluestocking, and her husband Patrick Delany, the Dean of Down and an old friend of Swift's. Faulkner, the Dublin bookseller, cried up *Tristram Shandy* to one of their clerical friends, and so they were on the brink of purchasing the book to read aloud by the fireside, when a note of warning arrived from Mrs. John Dewes, Mrs. Delany's sister in England. Whereupon the dean became "very angry" with Sterne, and declared that the book should never enter his house. Mrs. Delany, accepting her husband's decision, was terribly alarmed that *Tristram Shandy* should have been received in the household of Robert Clayton, Bishop of Cork and Ross, whom it diverted more than offended. "Mrs. Clayton and I," she wrote to her sister by the middle of May, "had a furious argument about reading books of a bad tendency; I stood up for preserving a purity of mind, and discouraging works of *that kind*—she for trusting to her *own strength and reason*, and bidding defiance to any injury such books could do her."‡

* Boswell's *Life of Dr. Johnson*, edited by Dobson, II, 44-45 (London, 1901).

† B. N. Turner's account of Dr. Johnson's visit to Cambridge in 1765, in the *New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register* for December, 1818; and *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II, 429.

‡ Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes, April 24 and May 14, 1760, in the *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, first series, III, 588, 593 (London, 1861).

Anxiety was felt in still other remote places for the influence of Sterne upon the morals of the kingdom. Mark Hildesley, for example, Bishop of Sodor and Man, and sometime chaplain to Lord Bolingbroke, enquired in the postscript of a letter to Samuel Richardson: "Pray, who is this Yorick? (a prebendary of York, I know he is). But what say you to his compositions, that have of late commanded so much of the attention and admiration of the wits of the present age. I am told, they have the countenance and recommendation of some ingenious Dutchesse: is this true or not?" Richardson wrote back: "Who is this Yorick? you are pleased to ask me. You cannot, I imagine, have looked into his books: execrable I cannot but call them." And then, casting his more detailed opinion into the form of a letter from a young lady in London to her friend in the country, the novelist went on to say of *Tristram Shandy*: "It is, indeed, a little book, and little is its merit, though great has been the writer's reward! Unaccountable wildness; whimsical incoherencies; uncommon indecencies; all with an air of novelty, has catched the reader's attention, and applause has flown from one to another, till it is almost singular to disapprove: Yet . . . if forced by friends, or led by curiosity, you have read, and laughed, and almost cried at Tristram, I will agree with you that there is subject for mirth, and some affecting strokes, . . . and I most admire the author for his judgment in seeing the town's folly in the extravagant praises and favours heaped on him; for he says, he passed unnoticed by the world till he put on a fool's coat, and since that every body admires him!" After receiving Richardson's strictures "upon the indelicately witty Yorick," the Bishop of Sodor and Man "accidentally read" some passages in the book and re-named it "Shameless Shandy."*

Moralists and men of letters as far apart in temper as Richardson and Walpole, commonly excepted from their reprobation Yorick's "excellent sermon of a peculiar kind on conscience," which Sterne had introduced into his book, as one of a handsome volume at the service of the public. Criticism like that which we have repeated, only less violent, had been passed upon *Tristram Shandy*, from its inception, by Sterne's

* Mrs. A. L. Barbauld, *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, V, 144-153 (London, 1804).

clerical brethren at York who saw the manuscript. Out of this criticism came no doubt the idea of balancing his character, so to speak, by following up the book with a collection of his sermons. With this end in view, he packed up a bundle of them along with his best clothes on that March morning when he set out for London with the squire of Stillington. The preliminary agreement made with Dodsley a few days later was, it will be recalled, not only for a second edition of *Tristram Shandy*, but also for two volumes of sermons. After long delay and a continuous stream of advertisements in the newspapers, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* made their appearance on the twenty-second of May, the week before their author stepped into his carriage for the journey homewards. The two volumes, containing fifteen sermons in the whole, were brought out in the form and type of *Tristram Shandy*, with the Reynolds portrait as engraved by Ravenet for frontispiece. There was a curious preface, written partly as an apology for the author's pseudonym and for the haste with which the volumes had been put through the press, and partly to explain their character and to forestall a possible charge of plagiarism:

"The sermon which gave rise to the publication of these, having been offer'd to the world as a sermon of *Yorick's*, I hope the most serious reader will find nothing to offend him, in my continuing these two volumes under the same title: lest it should be otherwise, I have added a second title page with the real name of the author:—the first will serve the bookseller's purpose, as *Yorick's* name is possibly of the two the more known;—and the second will ease the minds of those who see a jest, and the danger which lurks under it, where no jest was meant. . . . I have little to say in their behalf, except this, that not one of them was composed with any thoughts of being printed,—they have been hastily wrote, and carry the marks of it along with them.—This may be no recommendation;—I mean it however as such; for as the sermons turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and those kindred virtues to it, upon which hang all the law and the prophets, I trust they will be no less felt, or worse received, for the evidence they bear, of proceeding more from the heart than the head. I have nothing to add, but that the reader, upon old and beaten subjects, must not look for many new thoughts,—'tis well if he has new

language; in three or four passages, where he has neither the one or the other, I have quoted the author I made free with —there are some other passages, where I suspect I may have taken the same liberty,—but 'tis only suspicion, for I do not remember it is so, otherwise I should have restored them to their proper owners, so that I put it in here more as a general saving, than from a consciousness of having much to answer for upon that score."

The second title-page, which was added for the comfort of the clergy and professional moralists, ran: "Sermons by Laurence Sterne, A.M. Prebendary of York, and Vicar of Sutton on the Forest, and of Stillington near York." Between the preface and the second title was printed a list of six hundred and sixty-one subscribers, which gathered in nearly everyone worth knowing in the kingdom—dukes, duchesses, earls, and countesses; bishops, deans, university fellows, canons, and prebendaries; statesmen, politicians, and physicians; long rows of men who could write esquire after their names, and Mr. Charles Burney, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Hogarth, Mr. Reynolds, William Whitehead the poet laureate, and Mr. Wilkes, Member for Aylesbury. In reading through the list, one wonders what use could be made of sermons by Wilkes, the profane politician, or by playwrights, actors, and wits, like Beard and Rich and Delaval. But taken as a whole, it was a handsome troop of titles and names which Sterne could show to his Yorkshire friends in proof of his great and sudden fame.

Sterne's sermons thus entered the world, guarded, as the author thought, with every precaution for their safety: no preface could be franker; no roll of patrons could be more impressive. But within a fortnight they were visited by a fierce assault from one of Griffiths's men in the *Monthly Review* for May. The point of attack was not the character of the sermons themselves, but their appearance under the assumed name of Mr. Yorick. This manner of publication, the angry reviewer considered "as the greatest outrage against sense and decency, that has been offered since the first establishment of Christianity—an outrage which would scarce have been tolerated even in the days of paganism. . . . For who is this *Yorick*? We have heard of one of that name who was a *Jester* —we have read of a *Yorick* likewise, in an obscene romance.

—But are the solemn dictates of religion fit to be conveyed from the mouths of buffoons and ludicrous romancers? Would any man believe that a preacher was in earnest, who should mount the pulpit in a Harlequin's coat?" Likewise a venerable prelate remonstrated with Sterne for his unseemly conduct, protesting that "he could not bear to look into sermons wrote by the king of Denmark's jester." The conversation that ensued, ending with Yorick's witty retort to the troubled ecclesiastic, may be read in the *Sentimental Journey*:

"Good my lord! said I; but there are two Yoricks. The Yorick your lordship thinks of has been dead and buried eight hundred years ago; he flourish'd in Horwendillus's court—the other Yorick is myself, who have flourish'd, my lord, in no court—He shook his head—Good God! said I, you might as well confound Alexander the Great with Alexander the Coppersmith, my lord—'Twas all one, he replied.

"— If Alexander king of Macedon could have translated your lordship, said I, I'm sure your lordship would not have said so."

Aside from title and preface, the pretty volumes were greeted with universal praise. Even Griffiths's man, bitter though he was at the outset, went through the sermons one by one in two issues of his magazine; and, carried away by the preacher's eloquence, he was ready to avow after the first volume: "We know of no compositions of this kind in the English language, that are written with more ease, purity, and elegance; and tho' there is not much of the pathetic or devotional to be found in them, yet there are many fine and delicate touches of the human heart and passions, which, abstractedly considered, shew marks of great benevolence and sensibility of mind. If we consider them as moral essays, they are, indeed, highly commendable, and equally calculated for the entertainment and instruction of the attentive reader." Smollett's man in the *Critical Review* for May apprehended that Yorick's name on the title-page might be an offence to moralists and bigots; but for himself he beheld with pleasure "this son of Comus descending from the chair of mirth and frolick, to inspire sentiments of piety, and read lectures in morality, to that very audience whose hearts he has captivated with good-natured wit, and facetious humour. Let the narrow-

minded bigot persuade himself that religion consists in a grave forbidding exterior and austere conversation; let him wear the garb of sorrow, rail at innocent festivity, and make himself disagreeable to become righteous; we, for our parts, will laugh and sing, and lighten the unavoidable cares of life by every harmless recreation: we will lay siege to Namur with uncle *Toby* and *Trim*, in the morning, and moralize at night with Sterne and Yorick; in one word, we will ever esteem religion when smoothed with good humour, and believe that piety alone to be genuine, which flows from a heart, warm, gay, and social.” The long panegyric was broken by only one discordant note. The reviewer thought that Sterne had carried his familiar style, almost uniformly beautiful in its simplicity, to excess in the famous sermon which opens with a denial of the text. It was undignified, all must agree, for the preacher to set his own wisdom against the wisdom of Solomon.

The poet Gray, who understood the jest of the preacher exactly, enquired of his friend Thomas Wharton: “Have you read his sermons (with his own comic figure at the head of them)? they are in the style, I think, most proper for the pulpit, and shew a very strong imagination and a sensible heart: but you see him often tottering on the verge of laughter, and ready to throw his periwig in the face of his audience.”* Even some of the Delany-Granville set who would not take in *Shandy*, were almost persuaded by the sermons that they had misjudged the author. “Pray read,” Lady Cowper enjoined Mrs. Dewes, “Yorick’s sermons, though you would not read *Tristram Shandy*. They are more like essays. I like them extremely, and I think he must be a good man.”† Dr. Johnson was among the very few who were never won over. On a visit to Lichfield, an old friend placed a volume of the sermons in his hand for an opinion. Johnson asked him whether he ever read any others. “Yes, Doctor,” replied his friend, “I read Sherlock, Tillotson, Beveridge, and others.” “Ay, Sir,” retorted Johnson, “there you drink the cup of salvation to the bottom; here you have merely the froth from the surface.” At another time Johnson nevertheless admitted that he had read Yorick’s sermons while travelling in a stage coach; but

* Letter to Wharton, July, 1760.

† *Autobiography and Correspondence*, first series, III, 593.

he added "I should not have even deigned to look at them had I been at large."*

For some reason the notion has prevailed that Yorick's sermons were never really delivered; that they are only a bastard literary form, cast in a homiletic mould for the sake of publication. Sterne, however, made an explicit statement to the contrary. "Not one of them," said his preface, "was composed with any thoughts of being printed." Their publication, as I have remarked once before, was clearly an afterthought—a late device, as it were, on Sterne's part for averaging himself up with the public, and, I may add now, for laying a further tax upon the nobility and gentry of the realm. Besides his two parishes, Sterne had held for twenty years a prebend in York Cathedral. Twice every year—on the sixth Sunday in Lent and the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity—he drove in from Sutton to take his turns at the minster, and at various other times to supply the places of his brethren, especially of his friend Dean Fountayne, who, according to the usual arrangements, was appointed to preach the sermon for All Saints. The young prebendary, eager for preferment, liked this work, for it kept him before the public—and put every year twenty guineas into his purse. By 1760, he seems to have had by him thirty-odd sermons, carefully written out and laid aside, most of which had been prepared for the cathedral pulpit, and two of them for unusual occasions. From this convenient repertory were selected without doubt the fifteen that went into print.

In making up the volumes for the press, some caution was needed on Sterne's part, due to his habit of drawing freely from the great preachers of the past. His chief model, despite Dr. Johnson's contrast between them, was Archbishop Tillotson, whom Sterne had read at the university and kept by him ever since. Next to Tillotson was Dr. Edward Young, Dean of Sarum and father of the poet, whose sermons were likewise a Cambridge book. Near them lay also, in Sterne's estimation, Dr. Joseph Hall, the unfortunate Bishop of Norwich back in the reign of Charles the First, whose *Decades* and *Contemplations* could be easily expanded into sermons. Besides these three, there rested on Sterne's shelf several other divines (including Dr. Samuel Clarke and Dr. Daniel Waterland) who

* *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II, 429.

were occasionally taken down and placed on his desk during the process of composition. From any one of them he might work out a sermon acceptable to his congregation, repeating and amplifying the original as much as he liked. But the issue under his own name of patchworks or paraphrases was a thing to be avoided.

For his future guidance it was the custom of the imaginary Yorick, says Mr. Tristram Shandy, “on the first leaf of every sermon which he composed, to chronicle down the time, the place, and the occasion of its being preached: to this, he was ever wont to add some short comment or stricture upon the sermon itself, seldom, indeed, much to its credit:—For instance, *This sermon upon the Jewish dispensation—I don't like it at all;—Though I own there is a world of WATER-LANDISH knowledge in it,—but 'tis all tritical, and most critically put together.—This is but a flimsy kind of a composition; what was in my head when I made it?*

“N.B. *The excellency of this text is, that it will suit any sermon,—and of this sermon,—that it will suit any text.*”

“—*For this sermon I shall be hanged,—for I have stolen the greatest part of it. Doctor PAIDAGUNES found me out. Set a thief to catch a thief.*”—”

This was also Sterne's custom as attested by Isaac Reed, the editor of Shakespeare, who saw the manuscript of two of Sterne's sermons and copied out the whimsical remarks sprawled across them. At the end of one bearing the title “Our Conversation in Heaven” was the endorsement: “Made for All Saints and preach'd on that Day 1750 for the Dean. —Present: one Bellows Blower, three Singing Men, one Vicar and one Residentiary.—Memorandum: Dined with Duke Humphrey.” At the end of the other, entitled “The Ways of Providence Justified to Man,” Sterne wrote: “I have borrowed most of the Reflections upon the Characters from Wollaston, or at least have enlarged from his hints, though the Sermon is truly mine such as it is.”* And to the comment

* These remarks were copied by Reed into a volume containing Sterne's first two sermons, published at York in 1747 and 1750 respectively. When the first edition of this book appeared, the volume was owned by Mr. W. A. White of New York City.

on the first of the two, the preacher might have added that the text and much else had been taken from Tillotson on "The Happiness of a Heavenly Conversation."

These two sermons Sterne cast aside for the present; but it was difficult for him to find fifteen which showed no traces of his borrowings. "Job's Account of the Shortness and Troubles of Life" went in with the original memorandum printed as a footnote: "N.B. Most of these reflections upon the Miseries of Life are taken from Wollaston," that is, from the widely read *Religion of Nature*. "Evil Speaking," though mainly a restatement of Tillotson's "Against Evil Speaking," passed muster after a casual reference to the witty archbishop. "Joseph's History" acknowledged a paraphrase from Steele's *Christian Hero*, but forgot Hall's "Contemplation on Joseph," out of which the sermon had been elaborated. It likewise seems to have slipped the preacher's mind that the charity sermon on "Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath" contained literal repetitions from Hall's "Elijah at Sarepta." To cover these and all other cases where notes or memory failed him, Sterne regarded as sufficient the general apology of his preface. It was of course not necessary for him to inform the public that the sermon on "Self-Knowledge" was merely a dilution of the one on "The Abuses of Conscience," which everybody had read in *Shandy*; for when a man has once said a good thing, there can be no harm in his repeating it. Doctor Paidagunes could find no fault with an author for doing that.

Quite as interesting as what Sterne said or omitted to say about the old divines who collaborated, as it were, with him on his sermons, are his notes on time and place of delivery. "The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath" was delivered, as we remember, at St. Michael-le-Belfrey before the charity schools of York on Good Friday, 1747, and published soon after. "Very few" read, said a new advertisement, this eloquent sermon, which the author placed among the best. The manuscript of the sermon on "Penances," now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, has the following memorandum at the end: "Preached April 8th, 1750. Present Dr. Herring, Dr. Wanly, Mr. Berdmore." "The Character of Herod," a footnote explained, was preached on Innocents' Day, presumably in the minster for the Dean of York. "The Pharisee and Pub-

lican in the Temple" was, in like manner, assigned to Lent, when the preacher came in to take his turn as Prebendary of North Newbald. To the same season belongs also, as the footnote again expressly declares, "The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning," one of Sterne's most brilliant studies in contrast. Many have believed that this sermon at least, whatever may be said of the rest, could never have been delivered. But the evidence all points to the contrary. It is almost a certainty that Sterne, rising into the cathedral pulpit on his Sunday in Lent, near the close of his residence at Sutton, and reading from Ecclesiastes, proceeded forthwith to attack the truth of his text with the startling phrase "That I deny." Except that it may be "fruitful in virtue," declared the preacher in conclusion, "Sorrow . . . has no use but to shorten a man's days—nor can gravity, with all its studied solemnity of look and carriage, serve any end but to make one half of the world merry, and impose upon the other."

Other notable sermons, like the one on happiness or its companion on philanthropy, were included without a note; perhaps because Sterne looked upon them as wholly his own and as suitable for any day in the church calendar. But if we had the full secret of these and the rest, we should doubtless find that they were published practically as they had been written at sundry times for his cathedral congregation and afterwards repeated at Sutton and Stillington. This is not to say that he did not make many minor changes in them as they were going through the press, adding or dropping out words, phrases, and clauses here and there to the advantage of his style. Such was his method, as we may see by comparing the three printed versions we have of the sermon on conscience. "That I deny," it may be, was an afterthought in place of a more general repudiation of Solomon. But that Sterne's revision of his sermons for Dodsley went beyond details is really impossible. Had he wished it, there was no time for rewriting them during the months he was in London marching from one great house to another.

Taking Sterne's first sermons as they stand, with all their faults and with all their commonplaces drawn out of Tillotson and others, they fully deserved the applause that attended their publication. Some of them could not have been very effective

as spoken discourses. At times, we know, Sterne failed utterly as a preacher. When it was his turn to preach in the minster, "half of the congregation," says John Croft, "usually went out of the church as soon as he mounted the pulpit, as his delivery and voice were so very disagreeable." This we can well understand in the case of the more perfunctory sermons wherein the preacher made no effort to keep his congregation awake. But it was not always so. On special occasions, when he brought to bear upon his theme all the resources of an eloquent rhetoric, he filled church or cathedral and "gave great content to every hearer." According to a story which Sterne himself is reported to have related to a company of fellow clergymen, he was addressed one Sunday, as he was descending from the cathedral pulpit, by a poor widow sitting on the steps. She enquired of him where she might have the honor of hearing him preach on the next Sunday. After she had followed him about to his great discomfort for a succession of Sundays from one church to another, always taking the same position on the steps of the pulpit and always asking the same question, he finally chose as his text, modifying Holy Writ, the words: "I will grant the request of this poor widow, lest by continual coming she weary me." "Why, Sterne," immediately retorted one of the company, "you omitted the most applicable part of the passage, which is,—Though I neither fear God nor regard man." "The unexpected retort," it was added, "silenced the wit for the whole evening."*

Uneven as they are for the pulpit, most of Sterne's sermons are admirable for the closet. In one of their aspects they were correctly described by contemporary reviewers as brief moral essays, any one of which may be easily read in fifteen minutes, or an entire volume at a sitting. After it is all over, a reader lays aside the book in a gentle frame of mind, having been soothed for two hours by a quiet and not too insistent optimism. He has been disturbed by nothing doctrinal, by no undue religious fervor, and by little religious cant—that jargon of the pulpit compounded of ill-understood and ill-related Biblical metaphors. If a passage becomes dull now and then, it is succeeded by a gay thrust at the Church of Rome, a flash of

* Rev. John Adams, *Elegant Anecdotes and Bon Mots*, 267-268 (London, 1790).

humor, or an apt quotation from Shakespeare, Epicurus, or Plutarch. Henry Venn, the evangelical divine, who read the sermons just after their publication, was grieved because there was nowhere in them "any mention of the Prince of Peace, in whom God was manifest." If we except a phrase or two, he wrote to a friend, "they might be preached in a synagogue or mosque without offence."^{*} Likewise Walter Bagehot, unfortunately one of the last, I suppose, to look through Sterne's sermons, was disappointed to find that "there is not much of heaven and hell" in them. "Auguste Comte," he went on to say, "might have admitted most of these sermons; they are healthy statements of earthly truths, but they would be just as true if there was no religion at all; . . . if the 'valuable illusion' of a deity were omitted from the belief of mankind."[†] What the astute critic said is somewhere near the truth; and the statement is to their favor, though it was not meant to be so. Sterne could have given no offence to the deists of his age. In fact, he associated with them and prepared—as will be duly related—one sermon especially for a famous group of them. He preached a sort of common-sense philosophy, which, if it had little to do with Christian dogmas, never contradicted them. The evil and disorder in the world was as apparent to him as to the philosophers; he yet believed implicitly in the essential goodness of human nature and in the wise and just ways of Providence. The author of Yorick's sermons, said Lady Cowper, must be after all a good man; certainly a good man, if he followed his own instruction.

Apart from their excellent morality, Sterne aptly called his sermons "dramatic." Very likely he had in mind to some extent the breaks and pauses of the preacher and his direct addresses to Solomon, to St. Paul, or to God Himself in the course of the delivery; with all of whom he professed to disagree, though in the end he would come to the conclusion that the Scriptures, if properly interpreted, were always in the right. But Sterne was more than an actor. His best sermons are embryonic dramas, in which an effort is made to visualize scene and character, as though he were writing for the stage.

* Letter dated June 20, 1760. In *Life and Letters of the late Rev. Henry Venn*, 71 (New York, 1855).

† Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, II, 111 (London, 1879).

Everywhere a lively imagination is at work on the Biblical narrative. If the preacher wishes to vindicate human nature against the charge of selfishness, he simply portrays the life of an average man, like scores in his congregation, from boyhood through youth, and through manhood on to old age, and lets the proof of his thesis rest with the portrait. No one who has heard or read the sermon is disposed to doubt the text that "none of us liveth to himself." If time and change be the theme, then again are brought on the imaginary stage the careers of two men—the one successful and the other unsuccessful, as the world views them—with a final justification, when the drama broadens, of God's dealings with His children. Human nature, the preacher may assert, is so inconstant that we can never know what a man will do. The statement may be a commonplace to everyone in his congregation; but the commonplace is forgotten in Sterne's illustration of it through a whole series of portraits drawn with a few strokes from his own experience and observation. Sometimes a sermon consists of a single character-sketch rendered in full detail; it may be Job or Herod. Again, for a study in contrast, two characters run along parallel to each other, like Nathan and David, or the Pharisee and the Publican in the Temple. Scenes of this kind Sterne, avoiding all abstractions, realized completely and triumphantly.

If Sterne's psychology was crude, so was all the psychology of the age. Complex human nature can not be summed up in Pope's neat doctrine of ruling passions, which was accepted by Sterne. It does not explain Solomon to call him "a reformed sensualist," nor Herod to conclude that ambition was the first spring of his character, which, so to speak, put into motion all the other wheels. But under Sterne's hands the method resulted in most striking portraits. For setting forth the character of these and other men in Scripture, Sterne frequently impersonated them, spoke as he fancied they must have spoken, giving their points of view, their reasons for their conduct, in conversation or in monologue. In this dramatic manner the man of Jericho, for example, soliloquizes for a half page and more after he had been passed by, "friendless and unpitied," by priest and Levite; and the Samaritan paused over the unfortunate traveller for a still longer meditation before deciding

to "soften his misfortunes by dropping a tear of pity over them." Everywhere Sterne thus lets his imagination play upon the few details furnished him by Scripture, building up scenes and characters just as Shakespeare knew how to do from an incident or two out of Holinshed. Sometimes, as in "*The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning*," a beautiful allegorical veil hangs over the drama, under which we pass through scenes alternating with joy and sorrow, depicted with perfect art. This dramatic discourse is Sterne's most complete allegory of human life.

No more readable collection of sermons came from the press of the eighteenth century, and none with a clearer stamp of literature upon them. He is "the most taking composer of sermons that I ever read," the young James Boswell remarked of Mr. Tristram Shandy.

C H A P. X.

Shandy Hall. Tristram Shandy: Volumes III and IV.

June, 1760—May, 1761

TAKING several sets of sermons along with him for friends and subscribers in the north, Sterne left London for York—in his own carriage drawn by his own horses, as we have seen him—on Monday, the twenty-sixth of May. Driving leisurely, he should have made his smart entry through Micklegate before nightfall of the following Thursday, in ample time to appear in the pulpit of St. Peter's on Sunday. During his absence, his wife and daughter had occupied lodgings in the Minster Yard. Mrs. Sterne, he found on returning, had recovered from the delusion that she was the Queen of Bohemia, despite sore trouble with the daughter left in her charge. The schoolmates of Lydia, says John Croft, had plagued and taunted her, since her father's book came out, with the name of Miss Tristram and Miss Shandy. In revenge, she wrote love letters to the girls who thus annoyed her, under the signatures of the several players of the York company. As she had anticipated, many of the letters were intercepted by parents and guardians, with the result that the girls were flogged or shut up in dark closets or otherwise severely punished. But as she had not anticipated, the practical joke cast so great a slur on the theatre, that the players were compelled to take up the matter and ferret out the person who was playing fast and loose with their names. The discovery must have thoroughly humiliated Mrs. Sterne, who was always anxious for the good report of her daughter. It was, however, a piece of childish mischief that could not have greatly troubled the author of *Tristram Shandy*.

Before moving out to Coxwold, Sterne remained at York with his wife and daughter for three weeks for business and recreation. It was incumbent upon him, first of all, to make provision for the spiritual welfare of the parishes he was leaving. In the case of Sutton, with whose squire he was mostly at variance, he barely fulfilled his obligations. On coming into

York for the previous winter, he had placed over that parish one Marmaduke Collier, who stayed on at a salary, as subsequently fixed, of £16 a year and the use of the parsonage house for residence. This cheap curate, who never attained to the dignity of a license, held his office solely on a private arrangement with Sterne as Vicar of Sutton. Much to the vicar's amusement, as well as to the loss of his library and some furniture, Collier eventually ran away, after accidentally setting fire to the parsonage and burning it to the ground. Stillington, the seat of Stephen Croft, naturally fared much better. In charge of this parish was entrusted another Marmaduke—Marmaduke Callis—who had served as minister in other churches in the diocese. On Sterne's formal presentation of his name to the Dean and Chapter of York, Callis received a license to the curacy—after some delay, to be sure—on September 26, 1761; and Sterne generously agreed to pay him an annual stipend of £40, or the entire income of the living.*

There was necessary also some readjustment of the mortgage on the Tindall farm at Sutton, previously held by William Shaw, who, it would appear, had recently died. For by lease and release,† dated the second and third days of June, 1760, Sterne, jointly with John and Timothy Place, linen drapers of the city of London, whose names occur in later records among heirs to William Shaw, conveyed this property to Elizabeth Thompson, widow, of Holtby, a neighboring parish. Though the transaction cannot be precisely cleared up, it was, without much doubt, a transfer of the Shaw mortgage to Mrs. Thompson. At this time or a little later, the two dwellings and half of the lands which had been allotted to Sterne under the Sutton Enclosure Act, were leased to one Benjamin Shepherd, who also, it is likely, was "the promising tenant" that Sterne found for the Tindall farm two years before. Several other fields from the same award were leased to one Robert Mozeen. All this and other business incident to a change of residence was quickly concluded, and by the middle of June, Sterne had assumed the duties of his new parish.

Coxwold, where Sterne soon brought his family, lies seven

* The appointments of Callis and Collier are recorded in the Institutions of the Diocese of York.

† Registered at Northallerton.

or eight miles to the north of Stillington on the edge of the moors. The village straggles up a long and rather steep hill and loses itself at the top as one travels westward towards Thirsk, eight miles away. Well up the hill on the left stands the pretty church of St. Michael, overlooking village and valley; and beyond the church, on the right, close to the roadside, is the house which Sterne used for residence and named Shandy Castle or Shandy Hall. Though now made over into cottages for laborers, it is still, as in Sterne's time, a strange-looking gabled structure, as if it were once a cloister which someone far back turned into a dwelling—low, rambling, and dark, with a huge irregular stone chimney buttressing the eastern end. It is the very house, one would say, with its nooks and corners and surprises, from which should issue a book like *Tristram Shandy*. "A sweet retirement," Sterne called it, where a jaded clergyman might take up his rest. For years he had longed to leave the York valley, which aggravated his cough and asthma. Now he had but to step into the garden at the rear of Shandy Hall, and there lay before him a wide sweep of the Hambleton Hills. He doubtless missed the intimate society of the Crofts; but near-by lived the master of the Coxwold grammar school, and within a mile or two was the seat of Lord Fauconberg, his friend and patron.

Once settled in Shandy Hall, Sterne was ready to proceed rapidly with his book. The main lines that the story was to take had been designed the previous year, and several of the anecdotes, like the birth and the misnaming of the hero, there are reasons for thinking, may have been then written out, but afterwards cut away in order to bring the first two volumes into a compass narrow enough to fit his purse or to please Dodsley. But anything from Shandy Hall was now sure of a market; and Sterne was so eager to lay a new tax on the public that he sat down to his papers at York before moving over to Coxwold. The new instalment of *Tristram Shandy* was resumed in earnest when he reached his parish; and we may, if we like, easily obtain a few glimpses of him at work through the summer and well on into the autumn.

His study, as a visitor enters the narrow hallway of Shandy Castle, was a small room to the right, from the door of which one still looks upon the yawning fireplace of the great stone

chimney. By the window stood in Sterne's day a plain deal-table with pen and inkwell, before which the author, in loose slippers and old dressing gown, took his seat in a cane chair, having a back that ran up into ornamental knobs, symbolizing, in Sterne's fancy, wit and discretion. Across the table and along the chimney-piece were strewn books which he had brought from his library at Sutton as most useful in composing the new *Shandys*. We can still read the titles of some of them as clearly as if we now saw them. There lay, for instance, *Rabelais* in Ozell's translation, Burton's *Anatomy*, Locke on the *Human Understanding*, and the famous *Textus Roffensis*, containing the solemn anathemas of the Church of Rome. Before Sterne had long been at work, books, table, and floor were spattered with ink, for he was a sloven with his pen, thrusting it nervously into the inkhorn and then dropping it upon himself or upon the floor on the way to his paper. The act of composition was to him a sort of obsession, during the strenuous period of which he imagined a host of quaint demons grinning and clawing at his head and filling the room, just as we see them in old prints. When the fit was on, he could write almost continuously through the day—at will, he used to claim, before meals or after meals, dressed or undressed, clean shaven or in neglected beard. But he was unable to smoke while composing and rarely at other times; “inasmuch as”—he said in reply to a conjecture that humor so “refined” as his must be hatched out by tobacco,—“inasmuch as the fumes thereof do concoct my conceits too fast so that they would be all torn to rags before they could be well served up.” Sometimes, it is a local tradition, Sterne would issue forth from Shandy Hall at a great rate, and half way down the hill would come to a sudden stop, and then rush back to his study to note down some fancy before it could escape him. And so it went on for weeks, until his brains became “as dry as a squeezed orange” and he had “no more conceit in him than a mallet.”

Hardly had Sterne set pen to paper this summer, when there began to arrive one disconcerting note after another from Warburton, hinting at personal and literary indiscretions the past winter and warning him to be on his guard in the future. Incidentally Sterne was told not to worry about the “profligate scribblers” who were hounding him, as such was “the common

lot of successful adventurers" in literature. This sort of hollow consolation, which may be akin to envy, disgusted Sterne, who with a clever rhetorical twist remarked in a letter to Miss Macartney a few weeks later, "that we bear the sufferings of other people with great philosophy—I only wish one could bear the excellencies of some people with the same indifference." Warburton, not exactly divining Sterne's talent, wished him to compose a series of trifles, at once playful and moral, such as could do no harm to their author and might instruct as well as amuse the reader. On receiving that letter, Sterne felt like throwing aside his manuscripts forever, and falling back into the humdrum duties of a country parson. But that was only a momentary impulse. Quickly regaining his emotional poise, he courteously thanked the bishop for his "kind and most friendly advice," and added: "Be assured, my Lord, that willingly and knowingly I will give no offence to any mortal by anything which I think can look like the least violation either of decency or good manners, and yet, with all the caution of a heart void of offence or intention of giving it, I may find it very hard, in writing such a book as *Tristram Shandy*, to mutilate everything in it down to the prudish humour of every particular. I will, however, do my best—though laugh, my Lord, I will, and as loud as I can too."

Warburton, elated by the reformation of Sterne, hastened to reply: "It gives me real pleasure (and I could not but trouble you with these two or three lines to tell you so) that you are resolved to do justice to your genius, and to borrow no aids to support it, but what are of the party of honour, virtue, and religion. You say you will continue to laugh aloud. In good time. But one who was no more than even a man of spirit would choose to laugh in good company; where priests and virgins may be present. . . . I would recommend a maxim to you which Bishop Sherlock formerly told me Dr. Bentley recommended to him, that a man was never writ out the reputation he had once fairly won, but by himself."

In the end, Sterne had only contempt for the literary advice with which Warburton was pestering him, and made a jest of it in conversation with his friends. No obstacle could stand in the way of his giving free utterance to what his attendant demons suggested to him, irrespective of the censures of the

grave. Let his critics say what they might, he would write for that audience, be it great or small, who could be counted on to relish genuine humor. "I shall be attacked and pelted," he wrote to Stephen Croft, "either from cellars or garrets, write what I will—and besides, must expect to have a party against me of many hundreds—who either do not—or will not laugh.—'Tis enough if I divide the world;—at least I will rest contented with it." With his mind thus made up, Sterne placed at the head of his manuscript a Latin sentence which he had seen in Ozell's *Rabelais** from John of Salisbury, the great churchman and humanist of the twelfth century. "I have no fear," to paraphrase the Latin as Sterne adroitly modified it to his own purpose, "of the opinions of those unskilled in these matters; but pray none the less that they spare my lucubrations, in the which it has ever been my aim to run from the gay to the serious and backwards from the serious to the gay."

The gay mood was to prevail mostly in the new volumes, which, among many things, tell of Mr. Walter Shandy's favorite hypotheses and how his expectations from them come to naught in the misfortunes that befall his son Tristram immediately after birth. Beginning where he had left off the year before, Sterne resumed the evening conversations between the two Shandys and Dr. Slop in the back parlor of the imaginary Shandy Hall, not to be confounded, as has been done so often, with Sterne's own habitation. In a bedroom upstairs lay Mrs. Shandy attended by the parish midwife and Susannah the housemaid. In the kitchen sat a group of idle servants, listening for the cry of a child from above. For some moments there had been a lull in the conversations of the back parlor. Walter Shandy had delivered a formal speech on the dangers that threaten a child's head at birth, and my uncle Toby was whistling *Lillabullero* in amazement at the alarming narrative, when a tramping was heard overhead near the bedside of Mrs. Shandy. Dr. Slop hurriedly took up his "green bays bag" containing his instruments of torture, but found, alas! that Obadiah had tied its mouth in a dozen hard knots for the safety of its precious contents. In vain he tried to unloose the intricate

* *Works of Francis Rabelais*, revised by Ozell, I, cxx (London, 1737).

"roundabouts" and "cross turns" which Obadiah had drawn with all the might of his hands and teeth; and then calling in desperation for a penknife to cut them, he thereby cut also his thumb to the bone. Whereupon he began "stamping, cursing and damning at Obadiah at a dreadful rate."

My uncle Toby, who had not the heart to curse the devil himself with so much bitterness, suspended his whistling, and Mr. Shandy rebuked the profane doctor for unduly wasting his strength and soul's health by heavy cursing over small accidents. Instead of being so profane on trivial occasions, it would be much better, Mr. Shandy tried to persuade him, for a man who must curse to heed the example of a gentleman of his acquaintance, "who, in distrust of his own discretion, . . . sat down and composed (that is at his leisure) forms of swearing suitable to all cases, from the lowest to the highest provocation that could happen to him, . . . and kept them ever by him on the chimney-piece, within his reach ready for use." Dr. Slop, who had never heard of the ingenious gentleman, became so interested in the anecdote that Mr. Shandy offered to show him a similar document, on condition that he should read it aloud before going upstairs. The doctor readily agreeing, Mr. Shandy forthwith reached up to the chimney-piece and gravely handed the Popish physician an authentic copy of the form of excommunication prepared for the English clergy by Ernulf, a learned Roman Bishop of Rochester in the old days. With wry face over an aching thumb tied up in the corner of his handkerchief, Dr. Slop was compelled to read through the terrible anathema, to the full discovery that it was not necessary to go outside his own church for an art and a gradation in cursing such as he had never dreamed of. Set beside the old bishop's copious profanity, the most violent oaths hitherto at his command, he was made to see, were tame and insipid, unworthy of the fine of five shillings which the government would inflict upon a gentleman for each petty offence.

His vocabulary of cursing enriched out of Ernulf's digest, Dr. Slop received an urgent summons above stairs from the frightened midwife; and the two Shandys, growing weary over a discourse on time and eternity, fell asleep as they sat in their easy armchairs by the fire. The two tired brothers would have slept on through the night, had they not been awakened

by the creak of a rusty door-hinge, announcing the entrance of Trim to inform them that Dr. Slop had come down to the kitchen to make a pasteboard bridge for the poor child's broken nose. With a deep and agonizing sigh, the grief-stricken father staggered to his feet, extending a hand, as he did so, to my uncle Toby, who led him silently to his bed, where he might best digest his affliction, as everybody knows, by lying flat upon his face, with an arm and leg dangling upon the floor. To understand, says Sterne, why the sad mishap to the boy caused so great grief in his father, it must be explained that the elder Shandy had staked all on his son's nose. It had long been a settled conviction of his that a long nose, besides being a useful ornament to the face, was also a forecast of character and distinction in life; while a short or flat nose, like the ace of clubs that disfigured the countenance of his great-grandfather, meant as surely misfortunes and disgraces against which no man could ever bear up, whatever might be his other endowments of mind or body.

Mr. Shandy had derived his whimsical notion from wide observation on the rise and fall of the best county families and from a multitude of curious treatises that touched upon the theme. But the one that had been of most profit to him was a learned folio by the German Slawkenbergius, who devoted his life to the philosophy of the nose. Unlike all the other books, this one contained merry tales—a hundred of them—written out in the purest Latin, to illustrate and enforce the scholar's doctrine in its hundred-fold divisions. Of the two or three tales that Mr. Shandy always read with much delight, Sterne relates one that hinges upon the disorder and confusion caused among the inhabitants of Strassburg by the appearance one summer evening of a stranger who entered their gates, riding upon a mule and guarding with a drawn scimitar an immense nose which he had obtained (so he told the sentinel) at the Promontory of Noses. For some time, says Sterne, there had been no great and vital question in dispute between the Roman Catholic and Protestant universities at Strassburg, but now one of the finest was thrown at their heads. Taking sides, logicians and theologians proved and disproved through long and acrimonious debate, each faculty using its own appropriate jargon, that the stranger's nose was a real nose, that it was only a

pasteboard nose, and that it was no nose at all, as if the affair were of as great moment as the altercation which divided the universities over the point in Martin Luther's damnation—whether the founder of Protestantism was damned to all eternity by the conjunction of the planets at his birth, and whether, the affirmative being proven, "his doctrines by direct corollary must be damned doctrines too." Slawkenbergius and his merry folio were, of course, pure fictions elaborated by Sterne for puzzling his learned public. The fanciful allegory of a land where one may purchase noses after his heart, was built up by Sterne mostly from a few hints out of Ozell's *Rabelais*, which lay at his elbow.*

The long digression on Slawkenbergius gave Mr. Shandy time to recover his grief in sufficient measure to converse and use his reason once more. No sooner had he reached that stage than he fell back upon another hypothesis whose aid might be yet invoked to save his son, disfigured and disgraced as he was by Dr. Slop's obstetric hand. For next to a man's nose, the squire held, with the old writers on his shelves, that a man's character and conduct all depend upon the name he happens to bear. Judas, do what he might, could have been only the traitor that he was; whereas Cæsar and Alexander conquered the world quite as much by the magic of their names as by their valor. *Jack*, *Dick*, and *Tom*, "like equal forces acting against each other in contrary directions," he also often affirmed, were neutral or indifferent names, numbering since the world began as many knaves and fools as wise and good men. It had been his intention to call his son *George* or *Edward*, which, though not the best names, stood rather high in his estimation as the titles of kings and princes. But to offset the broken nose, it was now necessary to choose the most potent name in his repertory, else his son would grow into a driveller and goose-cap. And so he resolved to christen him after Trismegistus, "the greatest of all earthly beings," whether considered as king, lawyer, philosopher, or priest, for he was all of them and more too.

But wisest fate said no. In the depth of night, while Mr. Shandy lay quietly sleeping, he was awakened by Susannah, who had come to tell him that his son was in convulsions near

* See "the fair of noses" in Ozell's *Rabelais*, I, 317.

to the point of death, that Parson Yorick could nowhere be found to baptize him, but that his curate was already in the dressing-room, holding the child upon his arm, black as the ace of spades, and waiting for the name.

"TRISMEGISTUS, said Mr. Shandy, and Susannah ran along the gallery with the name to her mistress's room.

"'Tis *Tris*—something, cried *Susannah*—There is no christian-name in the world, said the curate, beginning with *Tris*—but *Tristram*. Then 'tis *Tristram-gistus*, quoth *Susannah*.

"—There is no *gistus* to it noodle!—'tis my own name, replied the curate, dipping his hand, as he spoke, into the basin—*Tristram!* said he, &c. &c. &c. &c., so *Tristram* was I called, and *Tristram* shall I be to the day of my death."

"Of all names in the universe," Mr. Shandy "had the most unconquerable aversion for *Tristram*." It is a name, he would say, so low and contemptible that it "could possibly produce nothing *in rerum natura* but what was extremely mean and pitiful." Who, he used to ask (ignorant of the *Tristram* of romance), ever read or heard tell of "a man called *Tristram*, performing anything great or worth recording? No. . . . The thing is impossible." The next morning Mr. Shandy, as he was making tea with my uncle Toby, heard how Susannah and the curate lost *Trismegistus* between them; took down his hat from the peg, and walked away to meditate alone upon the final stroke of fortune.

There was, however, still one ray of hope, which Yorick, who was summoned for his advice, pointed out to the disconsolate father. Perhaps *Tristram*'s name might be changed. At any rate they would all—Mr. Yorick and the two Shandys—attend the next Visitation Dinner at York and lay the matter before the eminent advocates and divines learned in ecclesiastical law. The dinner threatened to break up in hubbub before coming to the question at all; for by some accident a hot chestnut was dropped or poked into the breeches of Phutatorius, who accused Yorick of maliciously placing it there. The riot over the chestnut, however, soon subsided; and Didius, the great church-lawyer, brought forward *Tristram*'s baptism for discussion. Mr. Shandy sat and listened to various amusing baptismal stories, learning, in the course of the evening, what

made a baptism null and what made it valid in the period before the Reformation, and that in special cases, like the Duchess of Suffolk's, it had been adjudged by the highest courts that the mother may not be of kin to her child. The company at length broke up without determining the cause presented to them. Still, Mr. Shandy felt paid for his visit to the dinner, for never before had his brain been so tickled by the subtleties of dialectic wit. After the York dinner, the narrative quickly terminated with an account of the squire's project for enclosing the great Ox-moor, followed by the timely death of his eldest son Bobby, making Tristram thereby heir-apparent to the Shandy family.

The new instalment of *Tristram Shandy* had many correspondences with the performance of the previous year. In both were the same or similar freaks of structure and style. As before, real and fictitious documents were introduced so cleverly that it was hard for the reader to determine the character of the one or the other. Latin and English stared at each other on opposite pages, as in Pope's *Imitations of Horace*. In the fourth volume a chapter was dropped out and the pagination tampered with. The preface was again thrust in as an intermediate chapter; and a marbled page, which should have been the ornamental lining to a cover, was transferred to the body of the book, as an emblem of its motley character.

Local satire and allusion still abounded, though it has now become extremely difficult to uncover most of it. Philip Harland's experiments in farming were gently ridiculed in Mr. Shandy's trouble with the Ox-moor; and from first to last Dr. Burton was crucified to the delight of his enemies. The Visitation Dinner was clearly a reminiscence of that turbulent dinner of the York chapter back in 1751 at George Woodhouse's, when Sterne and the Dean of York confronted Dr. Topham of the prerogative court and silenced him. Doubtless the portraits of several officials and clergymen present on that occasion were once recognizable under the Rabelaisian names that Sterne gave them, like Agelastes, who never laughed at a joke, and Somnolentus, who always slept through one. Dr. Topham surely appeared as Didius and shifted into Phutatorius before the dinner was over; and the hot chestnut which Yorick picked up from the floor after it had traversed the breeches of Phuta-

torius, not as an insult, but because he thought “a good chestnut worth stooping for,” was a ludicrous version of the old controversy over the commissaryship which Dr. Topham first resigned all right to, and afterwards claimed as his own when Sterne was willing to take it. And finally, the story of Tristram’s christening may well have been a rendering of a local anecdote over the blunders of curates and sponsors at baptisms, with which the armory of clerical jest had long been filled. Perhaps something like it had occurred in one of Sterne’s own parishes.—“Name this child,” once said a clergyman at the critical point in a baptism. “Zulphur,” responded the godfather. “That,” said the clergyman, “is not a name.” “Sulphur—Sulphur”—was the only result of another trial to get at the name, and the priest smiled. “He means Zilpah, Leah’s handmaid,” suggested the clerk, and the child escaped a worse fate than Tristram’s.*

It was Sterne’s own opinion that the new volumes surpassed the old “in laughable humour,” while they contained “an equal degree of Cervantic satire.” And he was right, except that his inspiration was not Cervantes so much as Rabelais. His genius was yet to develop in other ways, but in satire he had now reached high water. Never since Rabelais had “the lumber rooms of learning” been so thoroughly overhauled and the learned blockheads dragged out and subjected to so keen a ridicule as in the wordy controversies over the stranger’s nose and the points that nullify or make valid a baptism. It may be that some of the satire was misplaced and out of date; but, speaking generally, the old scholastic method of warfare still survived in philosophy and religion. Mr. Shandy was certainly not the last logician to employ the hypothesis as if it carried with it a sort of magic potency. Nor were the Shandy brothers the last men who, while invariably associating different ideas with the same words, have attempted to converse and reason together.

Coming nearer home, Sterne waylaid and pommelled deliciously the connoisseurs in art and criticism; one of whom measured the angles of *Tristram Shandy* with rule and compass, and pronounced it out of all plumb; and another timed

* P. H. Ditchfield, *The Parish Clerk*, 268 (London, 1907).

Garrick's pauses in Hamlet's soliloquy, without observing the actor's wonderful manner of bridging chasms with eye, attitude, and gesture, for he could not look away from the stopwatch in his hand, he said, if he was to count seconds and their fractions. The gentlemen on the *Monthly Review* and other magazines who had belabored Sterne for publishing sermons under the name of Mr. Yorick, were singled out for good-natured ridicule. They rumpled, cut, and slashed at Yorick's jerkin unmercifully, he told them; but they did not reach the sarcenet lining, and he still remained unharmed. And as he laid aside his pen, he drank a health to the big-wigs and long-beards who had admitted Yorick's wit but lamented his lack of discretion, asking them to relax a little from their gravity and try him once more. "True *Shandeism*," he assured them, "think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely through its channels, makes the wheel of life run long and chearfully round."

The third volume of *Tristram Shandy* was completed on the third day of August, and the fourth in November, after George the Third had begun his "propitious reign." Leaving his parish in charge of an assistant curate, Sterne went up to London alone the week before Christmas to watch his book through the press, which in advance of his coming had been advertised by Dodsley through the autumn in order to hedge off the spurious *Shandys* which were threatening the market. For following Sterne this winter, we have only a few letters to Stephen Croft relative to business with which the squire from time to time entrusted him. Sterne had several pictures copied for his friend, and purchased two prints for him, which, after being lent to Miss Gilbert, daughter of the Archbishop of York, who was at Twickenham with her father, were duly posted to Stillington Hall. He also sounded the war-office several times on the chance of promotion for Mr. Croft's son Stephen, who held a commission in the army. Fortunately, Sterne could not write on business without writing about himself and his book; so that much may be read in and out of these letters, if we can interpret the allusions and will heed the silences.

On reaching London, Sterne was in high spirits and at once plunged into society with the old zest. Much as last year, he could write after a month of it: "I never dined at home once since I arrived——am fourteen dinners deep engaged just now, and fear matters will be worse with me in that point than better." But beyond the dinners, no two London seasons were ever alike for Sterne. Old friends and old enemies were absent from town or they no longer regarded him, and new ones appeared to applaud or to abuse him. This year he was struck by the great changes that had taken place in "the looks and political reasoning" of the coffee-houses and all the companies he attended. The nation, he found to his surprise, was divided over the German war (as it was called) into two hostile camps, which he humorously called "Prussians and Anti-Prussians, Butes and Anti-Butes," breaking up the old distinction between Whig and Tory. The winter before it was nothing but Pitt, and none dared question the conduct of the great war-minister. In the meantime the war in Germany had gone disastrously; the loss of life in the field had been terrible; Prince Ferdinand, the hero of a year ago, was calling for forty thousand more men, and for provisions, else his army would starve in a fortnight; officers who should have been with their regiments were loitering about St. James's Coffee-House and Hyde Park; corruption was rampant, and loud complaints were heard of Pitt's "making a trade of the war."

George the Second had died in October, and everybody, the visitor observed, was talking about the boy who had succeeded him. Sterne, like all the rest, closely watched the youth's habits and his policy of peace as it unfolded during the winter. It was a novel sight for him to see on the throne a young man of energy, determined to be a king after the type set forth by Lord Bolingbroke in his *Patriot King*. "The King seems resolved," Sterne wrote to his friends at Stillington, "to bring all things back to their original principles, and to stop the torrent of corruption and laziness. . . . The present system being to remove that phalanx of great people, which stood betwixt the throne and the subjects, and suffer them to have immediate access without the intervention of a cabal——(this is the language of others): however, the King gives everything

himself, knows everything, and weighs everything maturely, and then is inflexible——this puts old stagers off their game ——how it will end we are all in the dark.”

An admirer of Pitt, Sterne had come to London as a Prussian, but he could not hold out against the strong sentiment towards peace and a king who was fast winning the hearts of his people by granting them free access to the palace, and by appearing among them at the theatre and elsewhere. Sterne on one occasion sat in the gallery of the House of Commons through an entire day, waiting for the appearance of Pitt to throw down the gauntlet in defence of the German war; but “a political fit of the gout seized the great combatant and he entered not the lists.” Instead of the expected speech, Sterne listened to a long and passionate debate, which began and ended with incoherent abuse of all who were crying for peace. A month later, he recorded the break-up of the ministry and the humiliation of Pitt, though his fall was not yet. “The court is turning topsy-turvy,” he wrote to Croft, “Lord Bute, le premier——Lord Talbot, to be groom of the chambers in room of the Duke of Rutland——Lord Halifax to Ireland——Sir Francis Dashwood in Talbot’s place——Pitt seems unmoved——a peace inevitable——Stocks rise——the peers this moment kissing hands, &c. &c. (this week may be christened the kiss-hands week) for a hundred changes will happen in consequence of these. . . . Pray, when you have read this, send the news to Mrs. Sterne.”

Just as the peers were kissing hands, an odd rumor was set going by Sterne’s enemies at York that George the Third had forbidden him the Court. He wrote back that Charles Townshend and other friends were very merry over the report, and assured him that he need fear “no accident of that kind.” He continued to attend, we may be sure, the king’s levees, and in February he was invited to the “grand assembly” of Lady Northumberland, soon to be appointed to her Majesty’s bed-chamber. The only place where Sterne was not a welcome guest seems to have been the house of Warburton in Grosvenor Square. The bishop professed to have heard from Garrick and Berenger certain stories about “our heteroclite parson” that disabled him from appearing longer “as his friend and well-

wisher.”* With many of the king’s favorites who entered the new ministry or were seen most about the Court, Sterne claimed acquaintance, and with some of them he was in easy social relations. Charles Townshend’s appointment as Secretary of War he announced to Stephen Croft a month in advance. If he lost Warburton, he gained in his place John, Viscount Spencer, one of the new peers. This most agreeable nobleman sent him a silver standish, invited him to Wimbledon, and in all ways befriended him as a patron should. It was a close friendship that continued to the end. Lord Spencer, however, was not a man to exert any restraint upon Sterne’s conduct; while Warburton, humbug as he was, did care for the conventions of the cloth and tried to keep Sterne within their bounds.

Warburton’s influence gone, Sterne soon drifted with the tide of fashion and social dissipation. In running through the list of the king’s friends, one is amazed to find there, John Wilkes excepted, the leading Monks of the disbanded Medmenham Abbey and other men whose lives were equally notorious. Sir Francis Dashwood, treasurer of the Chambers, and subsequently Chancellor of the Exchequer, was the founder of the profligate order; and a former member, George Bubb Dodington, who still kept up a semblance of the brotherhood at his Hammersmith villa, was created Baron Melcombe of Melcombe Regis. Sterne made the acquaintance of Wilkes the year before, and now fell in with his compeers. One morning he breakfasted with Robert Vansittart, recorder of Monmouth,—the Monk who brought to the abbey the baboon to which Sir Francis was wont to administer the eucharist. Sterne’s name was also associated by John Croft with a pair of wits of the same general stamp—Samuel Foote, the clever actor and playwright, and Francis Blake Delaval, an amateur actor, then a member of Parliament for Andover. Foote, who had just produced the *Minor* at the Haymarket, was at the height of his popularity, and Delaval was soon to be created a Knight of the Bath. About the two men, who were inseparable, many scandalous stories were in circulation. With no danger of a break

* See Warburton’s letters to Garrick dated June 16 and June 26, 1760, in *Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, 117-118 (London, 1831).

in their friendship, Delaval married Foote's mistress. Ten years after Sterne first knew them, Delaval was found one morning dead on the floor of his room, with an empty bottle of usquebaugh lying by his side. "It is therefore supposed," said the newspapers naïvely in recording the sudden death, "that he had got up in the night to get something to drink." No doubt it would have been better for Sterne and some aspects of his art, had he never known and associated with these men or their like; but it is just, as well as charitable, to suppose that he was drawn to them, not by their immorality, in which there is no evidence of his sharing, but by their extraordinary wit and good fellowship—qualities which attracted even Dr. Johnson to Vansittart. They were the fine gentlemen of the period.

Amid the earlier engagements of the season, Sterne had the proofs of his book to revise in the morning. It was his custom to make minor changes at the last moment, "pricking in the lights," so to speak, in modern phrase. This year there was some question about Slawkenbergius on noses, which, a reader will observe, is so placed that it could be cut out with a little readjustment of the text before or after the tale. Stephen Croft, who had acted as Sterne's adviser during the period of composition, objected to Slawkenbergius, probably on the ground that as a story it ran upon an equivocation too long drawn out to pass muster. Twice he remonstrated with Sterne by letter after the author had reached London. From Sterne's first reply, it seems quite likely that he met his friend's objection by shifting the emphasis of the episode from equivocation to a satire on misplaced and futile learning. Be this as it may, Sterne had decided to let Slawkenbergius stand, for his friends in London had read the manuscript and approved. In high spirits he then wrote to Stephen Croft: "As to the main points in view, at which you hint—all I can say is, that I see my way, and unless Old Nick throws the dice—shall, in due time, come off the winner,—Tristram will be out the twentieth—there is a great rout made about him before he enters the stage—whether this will be of use or no, I can't say—some wits of the first magnitude here, both as to wit and station, engage me success—time will shew."

Heralded by wits and coffee-houses, the second instalment

of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, comprising the third and fourth volumes of the work, issued from Dodsley's press—a week later than the author had expected—on Wednesday the twenty-eighth of January, 1761, in company with a new edition of the first two volumes. It contained, as if to frighten away over-violent criticism, compliments to Reynolds as an easy and graceful painter, and to "my dear friend Garrick, whom I have so much cause to esteem and honour." Pitt was alluded to in the "statesman turning the political wheel . . . against the stream of corruption"; and Mr. Shandy spoke of the glory and honor surrounding the names of the young king and the Duke of York, of whom the latter had noticed Sterne the preceding May. On the other hand, Warburton was dealt a covert thrust in the reference to a bishop who complained of being splashed by Yorick's horse. Hogarth and Ravenet his engraver were again called in for a frontispiece, representing the scene in Mrs. Shandy's dressing-room the moment after Yorick's curate had christened Tristram by the wrong name. The *London Magazine*, then the semi-official organ of the ministry, very properly inserted a congratulatory note in its January issue, saying: "At length the *real*, the inimitable Shandy, again makes his appearance, and all the host of impotent criticks and imitators look aghast, at his superior genius. Whoever of our readers have, with true relish read his former volumes, may be assured that their perusal of the third and fourth will not be attended with less delight."

But Sterne's friends among the great availed not with the professional critics, or with a large section of the public. Horace Walpole, writing to a Yorkshire parson early in March, observed by the way: "The second and third volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, the dregs of nonsense, have universally met the contempt they deserve: genius may be exhausted;—I see that folly's invention may be so too."^{*} Outside the *London Magazine*, the author and his book were everywhere denounced in print. The *Monthly Review*, for example, in its March number, apologized for all that it had ever said in favor of the first volumes, and then proceeded to read Sterne a lecture on the proprieties and the art of writing one's self out.

* *Letters*, edited by Toynbee, V, 32.

The publication of a book like *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne was told, might be only venial in a Foote, who professed to write nothing but farces, but no act could be more reprehensible in a dignitary of the Church. "Do for shame, Mr. Shandy, hide your jerkin, or, at least, send the lining to the scowler's." "But your indiscretion, good Mr. Tristram," to go on with the address to Sterne, "is not all we complain of in the volumes now before us. We must tax you with what you will dread above the most terrible of all imputations—nothing less than DULLNESS. Yes, indeed, Mr. Tristram, you are dull, *very dull*. Your jaded fancy seems to have been exhausted by two pigmy octavos, which scarce contained the substance of a twelve-penny pamphlet. . . . Your characters are no longer striking and singular. We are sick of your uncle Toby's wound in his groin; we have had enough of his ravelines and breast-works: in short, we are quite tired with his *hobby horses*; and we can no longer bear with Corporal Trim's insipidity." Nothing in the book entertained the reviewer, except Ernulf's "extraordinary anathema," which Sterne had purloined, it was charged, from some old newspaper or magazine.*

The *Critical Review* for April, though in the main milder in tone and appreciative here and there, likewise read Sterne a philosophical essay on the different kinds of humor, down to the bastard forms he was practising in imitation of Rabelais. Like his brother on the *Monthly Review*, this critic claimed that Sterne had lost his audience, but he explained it differently. There was really, in his view, no marked difference between Sterne's two performances. "One had merit," he said, "but was extolled above its value; the other has defects, but is too severely decried." Slawkenbergius's Tale, for instance, shows that Mr. Sterne can write Latin "with elegance and propriety," and in other places he displays "taste and erudition." The trouble has really been with the public, it was the reviewer's opinion, who, having once gorged itself with *Tris-*

* The charge was unjust. The current translation of Ernulf's curse was the one, given with the Latin, in the *Harleian Miscellany*, VI, 493 *et seq* (London, 1745). The *Gentleman's Magazine* for September, 1745 (XV, 490), reprinted the translation. Sterne went to the *Harleian Miscellany* for the Latin and the translation, which he re-worked here and there for heightened phrase.

tram Shandy, could stand no more without “nausea and indigestion.” “All novel readers,” to quote him exactly, “from the stale maiden of quality to the snuff-taking chambermaid, devoured the first part with a most voracious swallow, and rejected the last with marks of loathing and aversion. We must not look for the reason of this difference in the medicine, but in the patient to which it was administered.”

These outrageous attacks no one will take over-seriously, for their animus is too apparent for that. The offence that the reviewers took at the immoralities of *Tristram Shandy* was mere humbug, for their own magazines and newspapers spoke at times a more vulgar language than Sterne’s at its worst. Sterne had chastised the reviewers because they censured him for publishing sermons under the name of Yorick, the king’s jester; and they were but repaying him in the same kind. There was not much more in it than this. If they had hitherto only rumpled his jerkin, they would show him that they could, when they wished, slash the lining. Sterne, as usual, professed indifference to them at first. Just as the storm was breaking over his head, he wrote to Stephen Croft: “One half of the town abuse my book as bitterly; as the other half cry it up to the skies—the best is, they abuse and buy it, and at such a rate, that we are going on with a second edition, as fast as possible.” But when the storm rose to its fury, Sterne became excited also. “If my enemies knew,” he then wrote again to Croft, “that by this rage of abuse and ill-will, they were effectually serving the interests both of myself, and works, they would be more quiet—but it has been the fate of my betters, who have found, that the way to fame, is like the way to heaven—through much tribulation—and till I shall have the honour to be as much maltreated as Rabelais and Swift were, I must continue humble; for I have not filled up the measure of half their persecutions.”

For many readers Sterne’s wit had no doubt lost its freshness, but so far as one can see, there was no immediate decline, as his enemies would have it, in the sale of *Shandy*, of which the second edition of the new instalment appeared on the twenty-first of May. Sterne was still the vogue as much as ever, only in a different set. “Where I had one friend,” he said, “last year to do me honour, I have three now.” And

every new friend, it is implied, meant a new reader. In March his fine portrait by Reynolds was placed on public exhibition by the Society of Artists. As last year, the garreteers accompanied his progress with books and pamphlets, of which the most pretentious was *The Life and Opinions of Bertram Montfichet*, a faithful and humble copy of Sterne's first instalment down to the Greek motto, paper, print, size and number of volumes, with an uncle Dick for my uncle Toby. The author of *Explanatory Remarks upon Tristram Shandy* found an audience for a second part in continuation; and another wit outdid Sterne's oddities by publishing *A Book without a Title-page*. Tristram Shandy also gave his name to a new country-dance, to a soup and a salad which could be had at the coffee-houses, and to a game of cards "in which the knave of hearts, if hearts are trumps, is supreme, and nothing can resist his power."

From the jests of scribblers, the transition is most abrupt to the last sight we get of Sterne in London for this year. *Lloyd's Evening Post* for Monday, the fourth of May, contained the following news-item:

"Yesterday morning a charity sermon was preached at the Chapel, belonging to the Foundling Hospital for the support of the children maintained and educated in the said hospital, by the Rev. Mr. Sterne, to a numerous audience, several of whom were persons of distinction, and a handsome collection was made for the further support of that charity."

This was Sterne's first and only appearance in a London pulpit. The Foundling Hospital, situated in Guilford street, was then a fashionable charity numbering among its numerous patrons many of the nobility. Peers, it is said, had stood as godfathers to deserted children in the Chapel of St. Andrew's, where Sterne officiated; Handel had frequently performed there, and on the walls hung portraits and other paintings by Hogarth, Reynolds, and their contemporaries, as gifts to the foundation. For several years the hospital had been scandalously mismanaged, and the last Parliament had revised its charter. It was a tribute to Sterne's popularity, if nothing more, for the new board of governors to turn to him as a preacher who would attract a large and generous congregation. It so happened that the new treasurer, George Whatley—known in America for his association and correspondence with

Franklin—was acquainted with Yorick; and to him accordingly fell the duty of inviting “Dr. Sterne,” as he was sometimes called, to take the annual charity sermon. After repeated promises, Sterne fixed the Sunday in a characteristic note, dated March 25, 1761, which he sent over to Whatley’s lodgings in Lothbury:

“On April the fifth, 1761, and sure as the day comes, and as sure as the Foundling Hospital stands, will I——(that is, in case I stand myself) discharge my conscience of my promise in giving you, not a half hour (not a poor half hour), for I never could preach so long without fatiguing both myself and my flock to death——but I will give you a short sermon, and flap you in my turn:—preaching (you must know) is a theologic flap upon the heart, as the dunning for a promise is a political flap upon the memory:——both the one and the other is useless where men have *wit enough* to be honest. This makes for my hypothesis of wit and judgment. I believe you to have both in a great degree, and therefore I am, with great esteem and truth, your’s,

“Laurence Sterne.

“P.S. I will take care to be walking under some colonnade, in or about the Hospital, about a quarter before eleven.”*

But Sterne did not tread the round of the hospital colonnades on that Sunday morning in April, owing either to ill health or to social engagements. It took still another month to bring him up to the sticking-point; and then he appeared on the first Sunday of May, his coming announced by the newspapers. The politicians, wits, and men of fashion with whom Sterne had intimately associated for four months, one may be certain, came to see how the author of *Tristram Shandy* would conduct himself in his clerical gown. Yorick took for his theme the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, on the text “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead.” It was a sermon of attitudes, pauses, and paradoxes, which must have

* This letter, from the original in possession of J. T. Rutt, was published in the *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* for August, 1806. In the issue for the preceding March, Rutt gave an account of George Whatley.

amused here and there his friends looking for Shandean eccentricity. The preacher put an imaginary speech into the mouth of a messenger from heaven calling upon his hearers to part with the vices that bring only death and misery to their doors, and addressed the Almighty directly on the distinctions between the rich and the poor, asking Him what they all meant, and then answering the question himself in the assurance that each man's case shall sometime be reconsidered by a just God, as the Rich Man of the parable found out to his pain. By the way Sterne admonished his "dear auditors" against "the treachery of the senses," and exhorted them "to be temperate and chaste, and just and peaceable, and charitable and kind to one another." At times the orator rose to a degree of pathetic eloquence, as in his appeal for alms "in behalf of those who know not how to ask it for themselves." In closing, his voice became husky; and his audience should have wept in response to his final invitation for tears.

It was not a great sermon; indeed, it hardly equalled the one Sterne preached before the charity schools of York in the days of his obscurity; but it was in a measure successful. The treasurer of the hospital reported to the managers a contribution amounting to fifty-five pounds, nine shillings, and two pence.*

*The minutes of the Foundling Hospital contain two entries with reference to the sermon. On Wednesday, April 29, it was ordered:

"That a paragraph be inserted in the Daily Papers that a Charity Sermon will be preached in the Chapel of this Hospital on Sunday next by the Revd. Mr. Sterne."

The paragraph appeared in the *Public Advertiser* of Saturday, May 2.

On Wednesday, May 6, the entry reads:

"The Treasurer reported that the Collection at the Anthem in the Chapel last Sunday, amounted to £55. 9. 2."

C H A P. XI.

Shandy Hall Continued. Tristram Shandy: Volumes V and VI. June, 1761—January, 1762

IT was well on in June before Sterne took his seat in the coach for York. On the road between Stilton and Stamford, he got a fright, if we are to interpret *Shandy* literally, at the reckless driving of the postillion down a three-mile slope; and, thrusting his head out of the window, he vowed to “the great God of day” that he would lock up his study door the moment he reached home and throw the key into his draw-well at the back of Shandy Hall. Merely stopping at York, he hurried on to his family at Coxwold. During the first weeks after his arrival he was, in contrast with the summer before, ill at ease in his parish. “The transition from rapid motion to absolute rest,” he complained in a letter to Hall-Stevenson, then in London, “was too violent.—I should have walked about the streets of York ten days, as a proper medium to have passed through, before I entered upon my rest.—I staid but a moment, and I have been here but a few, to satisfy me I have not managed my miseries like a wise man.” The weather, too, was “cold and churlish” on the moors, as if it were “bleak December.” His wife, piqued perhaps, as she had a right to be, at his long absence, received him coolly, declaring herself happier without him. “O Lord!” he cried out half-seriously in his desolation, “O Lord! now are you going to Ranelagh to-night, and I am sitting, sorrowful as the prophet was, when the voice cried out to him and said, ‘What dost thou here, Elijah?’—’Tis well the spirit does not make the same at Coxwold—for unless for the few sheep left me to take care of, in this wilderness, I might as well, nay better, be at Mecca.”

The mood of discontent, not quite genuine, quickly passed. Husband and wife came to an understanding, and Sterne resumed his parish duties with unwonted zeal, preaching regularly every Sunday. This year or the preceding, the parson received, it used to be said at Coxwold, a summons to the

death-bed of a poor widow on the outskirts of his parish; and after administering to her the last sacrament, he enquired what she intended to leave him in her will for his trouble. "Alas! Sir," answered the distressed woman, "I am too wretched to give a legacy even to my own relations." "That excuse," replied Yorick, "shall not serve me. I insist upon inheriting your two children, and, in grateful return for the bequest, I will take such care of them that they shall feel as little as possible the loss of an affectionate and worthy mother." "The expiring parent," concludes the anecdote, "at once comforted and surprised, assented; and Sterne religiously kept his promise." Whether the incident be true or not, it is interesting to get this traditional view of Sterne's kindness to his parishioners.* Sometime during the summer, he drew up a plan for re-seating his church, in the manner of a cathedral, that there might be "better sound" and "better light." The plan was submitted to Richard Chapman, the steward of Newburgh Priory, who sent it, with detailed comments, to Lord Fauconberg, then in London, for approval. On the day of the king's coronation, the twenty-second of September, Sterne entertained his entire parish and all the countryside. The story of it was told by Mr. Chapman in his letter to the Earl of Fauconberg under date of September the twenty-fifth:

"I am extremely obliged to your lordship for the coronation news, and am glad your lordship got excused from attending, which might have been of bad consequence. Here a fine ox with his horns gilt was roasted whole in the middle of the town, after which the bells put in for church, where an excellent sermon was delivered extempory on the occasion by Mr. Sterne, and gave great content to every hearer. The church was quite full, both quire and aisle, to the very door. The text, &c., you will see both in the London and York papers. About three o'clock the ox was cut up and distributed amongst at least three thousand people, after which two barrels of ale was distributed amongst those that could get nearest to 'em. Ringing of bells, squibs and crackers, tar-barrels and

* *Yorkshire Notes and Queries*, June, 1904. Sterne probably placed the children in one of the York schools for the maintenance and education of poor children.

bonfires, &c., and a ball in the evening, concluded the joyful day.”*

Sterne paid for the ox and perhaps for the ale out of his own pocket. His extemporary sermon, which had been carefully written out, dealt historically with the Church in England under Divine Providence, from the time God sent the Romans into Britain to open a pathway for the Gospel, and “*then put his hook into their nostrils* and led these wild beasts of prey back again into their own land,” down through the dark days of Popery to the Reformation, and on to the final deliverance of the kingdom from “the arts of Jesuitry” in the reign just ended. In conclusion the preacher exhorted his hearers to be loyal to King George the Third, and to live pure and sinless lives, that “the great and mighty God” might never have reason for withdrawing his mercies from the chosen people.

Earlier in the summer there had been some delay in beginning *Shandy* again. In July Sterne bought “seven hundred books at a purchase dog cheap,” in consequence of which his study was topsy-turvy for a week before he could get them set up. He seems to have been thinking, too, of further preferment in the Church, for he wrote a *clerum*, or the Latin oration preliminary to the degree of Doctor of Divinity; but he went no further, owing, it may be surmised, to the death in August of the Archbishop of York. Dr. Gilbert and his daughter, who, it is said, really ruled the diocese, were both most friendly to Sterne. The new archbishop, Robert Hays Drummond, who was translated from Salisbury, also proved to be well disposed to him, but the election was not yet, and the favor of the new archbishop could not yet be counted on to assist him to a Cambridge degree. Once started, Sterne went on with *Shandy* with more than his usual pace. On the tenth of August he arrived at the story of Tristram’s accident; by the first of September he was already in the fifth book; and by the close of October he may have been at the end. For nearly three months he worked steadily, amid the quiet of domestic scenes such as were never to return to him at Shandy Hall. Just as the conclusion was in sight, he wrote to a friend

* *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections . . . presented to Parliament by Command of his Majesty, II, 188-189* (London, 1903).

who had sent him belated congratulations on his appointment to Coxwold by the Earl of Fauconberg: "My new habitation . . . is within a mile of his Lordship's seat and park. 'Tis a very agreeable ride out in the chaise I purchased for my wife. ——Lyd has a pony which she delights in.—Whilst they take these diversions, I am scribbling away at my Tristram. These two volumes are, I think, the best.—I shall write as long as I live, 'tis, in fact, my hobby-horse; and so much am I delighted with my uncle Toby's imaginary character, that I am become an enthusiast.—My Lydia helps to copy for me——and my wife knits, and listens as I read her chapters."

At the outset of his work, Sterne was uncertain, any reader may see, as to the course his story was to run. Rabelais still rested at his elbow for hints, and Burton's *Anatomy*, I fear, lay wide open in front of him. Relying too much upon them and other books to awaken his fancy, he did not start out well in his first chapter, which opened with a riddle and closed with direct appropriations from Burton on "the relicks of learning" and on man as "the *miracle of nature*." The fragment on whiskers, which followed, was an elaborate *double entendre*, likewise pieced out of Burton, with the aid of the article on Margaret of Valois in Bayle's *Dictionary*, perhaps one of his seven hundred new books from London. The episode was skilfully stitched together, to be sure; but it was after all only a *double entendre*, without the brilliant satirical coloring of the chapter on noses, which it was intended to duplicate. From the old conversations in the parlor of Shandy Hall, Dr. Slop dropped out, except as he waddled through on his way to bind up Tristram's wound and to quarrel with Susannah. With Dr. Slop gone and Yorick put into his place, the butt of Sterne's satire went also. In consequence of this, the narrative moved on heavily for some pages through Mr. Shandy's philosophical lament over the death of Bobby, which came straight out of Burton.

Matters began to mend, however, when Sterne reached the story of Tristram's accident in the sashed window, which is one of Sterne's best anecdotes of that kind. All of Mr. Shandy's carefully laid plans for his son's physical welfare having now miscarried, through successive blunders of physician, curate, and housemaid, nothing remained for him but to

try a new system of education upon Tristram, in the hope of making a prodigy of him. To this end he wrote a *Tristrapædia* in rivalry with Xenophon's *Cyropaædia*, descriptive of the training which Cyrus the Great was supposed to pass through to the rule of the East. Forgetting his books at this point, Sterne passed in review, with excellent ridicule, a young man's career at school and university, as exemplified in his own experience, out to the theory that a short cut to knowledge—a Northwest Passage, so to speak,—might be opened through skilful practice in manipulating the auxiliary verbs. That scheme for the quick multiplication of ideas pleased Corporal Trim and my uncle Toby also, for some of the bravest men, they said, that they had ever fought by the side of in the Low Countries, were auxiliaries.

Still, in spite of many good things, Sterne knew instinctively that he could not continue longer on the oddities of Mr. Shandy, and escape the danger of writing himself out, as his critics intimated that he had done already. He therefore passed to the kitchen of Shandy Hall and over to my uncle Toby's bowling green for a set of characters not yet so far exhausted. Sterne's wit was always whimsical, but he never rendered the supreme charm and delicacy possible to the whim until he placed my uncle Toby before his toy fortifications on the bowling green, gazette in hand, giving Corporal Trim directions for attacking and winning the last town that Marlborough had entered in triumph. "When the *chamade* was beat, and the corporal helped my uncle up it, and followed with the colours in his hand, to fix them upon the ramparts—Heaven! Earth! Sea!—but what avails apostrophes?—with all your elements, wet or dry, ye never compounded so intoxicating a draught."

Sterne had employed gesture, too, in the delineation of character, beyond the skill of most humorists; but he never attained to the full scope and meaning of it until he let the corporal discourse on life and death, standing amid a motley group in the kitchen, who had just heard that Master Bobby would never return from his travels:

"‘Are we not here now,’ continued the corporal, (striking the end of his stick perpendicularly upon the floor, so as to give an idea of health and stability)—. . . ‘and are we

not'——(dropping his hat plumb upon the ground—and pausing, before he pronounced the word)——‘gone! in a moment?’ The descent of the hat was as if a heavy lump of clay had been kneaded into the crown of it.——Nothing could have expressed the sentiment of mortality, of which it was the type and fore-runner, like it,—his hand seemed to vanish from under it,—it fell dead,—the corporal’s eye fixed upon it, as upon a corps,—and *Susannah* burst into a flood of tears.”

Sterne was a sentimentalist, readers of this memoir need hardly be told, from the time he took hartshorn to bear up against the absence of Miss Lumley; but outside of some of his sermons, his pathos had been kept well in abeyance except for an occasional passage, like my uncle Toby’s fly or the death of poor Yorick. He was now reworking the old vein and refining it to pure gold. No humor could be gentler and more winning than Trim’s catechism, or my uncle Toby’s lament over the Peace of Utrecht, or the story of Le Fever, a poor lieutenant, like Sterne’s own father, who fell ill on the way to join his regiment in Flanders and lay near death at the village inn. My uncle Toby, though Le Fever was a stranger to him, felt so keenly for the distress of a brother officer that he could not sleep o’ nights or bear for a moment the thought of his dying. One evening, as Trim was putting his master to bed, he told him that it was all over with the poor soul, who would never march again, but must surely die. “He will march; said my uncle *Toby*, rising up from the side of the bed, with one shoe off: . . . marching the foot which had a shoe on, though without advancing an inch,—he shall march to his regiment. . . . He shall not die, by G——, cried my uncle *Toby*. ”

“The ACCUSING SPIRIT,” Sterne commented famously, “which flew up to heaven’s chancery with the oath, blush’d as he gave it in;——and the RECORDING ANGEL, as he wrote it down, dropp’d a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.”

The better part of these volumes was thus written under the clear and full inspiration of Sterne’s genius. “Ask my pen,” he says, why I write these details about Le Fever and my uncle Toby,—“it governs me—I govern not it.”

True, he has been accused of stealing my uncle Toby's oath, but I can not run down the theft, and think some mistake has been made about it. Certain parallels or analogies to it lie embedded in the so-called *exempla* of mediæval divines and moralists, but the search leads no further. Richard Rolle of Hampole, a hermit and author of the fourteenth century, for example, tells the story of a canon who was to be damned, it was supposed, because of imperfect repentance. A scholar wrote down his sins and gave the record of them to the abbot, who found them all blotted out, and the parchment as white and clean as if ink had never defiled it. Sterne's idea lay in this and other *exempla*, some of which he had met with in his reading; but he alone knew how to render it with humor and sentiment.

In the quiet and chastened humor that ruled Sterne while playing with pathos, his old enemies on the reviews escaped the usual long tirades. They were nevertheless not quite forgotten here and there. Sterne likened them, in beginning his sixth book, to a line of uncurried and forlorn jackasses, who viewed and reviewed him as he was passing over the rivulet of a little valley; "and when we climbed over that hill, and were just getting out of sight—good God! what a braying did they all set up together!" For the benefit of those who complained that they could not follow him through his digressions, he plotted the curves of his narrative, writing his own name beneath as the engraver. And for the moralists who feared contamination, he printed rows of stars in place of suppressed passages, and left one entire page blank, on which they might write what they pleased, to the end that his book should have at least one page "which MALICE will not blacken, and which IGNORANCE cannot misrepresent." Expressive of his general aim, he placed at the head of each volume, beneath the usual title, two Latin quotations (afterwards increased to three), one from Horace and one from Erasmus, taken not from the originals, but as he found them slightly changed in the *Anatomy of Melancholy*.* Speaking with Erasmus through Burton, he asked that his readers distinguish between his char-

* *Anatomy of Melancholy*, edited by A. R. Shilleto, I, 138 (London, 1903).

acter as clergyman and his rôle as jester. "If any one," to paraphrase the Latin, "objects that my book is too light and fantastic for a divine or too satirical for a Christian, let him remember that 'tis not I but Democritus who has spoken." While the book was in making, Sterne sent a draft of the story of Le Fever (as far as the second paragraph of the thirteenth chapter) to Lady Spencer, with comments thereon in his own hand, as a step towards inscribing that part of his work to her Ladyship, and the two volumes as a whole to her husband, John, Lord Viscount Spencer.

In anticipation of Sterne's coming to London to superintend the publication of his book, the scribblers, expecting something of the old order, had been unusually busy. Not without wit—coarse, it is true—was a shilling pamphlet which appeared late in October under the title: *A Funeral Discourse occasioned by the much lamented Death of Mr. Yorick, Prebendary of Y***k, . . . preached before a very mixed Society of Jemmies, Jessamies, Methodists and Christians, at a Nocturnal Meeting in Petticoat Lane*, on a text to be found in "the first chapter of the Gospel of the Jemmies, otherwise called the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, at the words: Alas Poor Yorick!" The preacher told his congregation that the report current that Mr. Sterne was now living and writing the fifth and sixth volumes of *Shandy* was false. It is barely possible, he added in explanation of his jest, that the animal Sterne may still be alive, but the spiritual Sterne, all his wit and fancy, died with Slawkenbergius's Tale and passed into oblivion. The pamphlet was dedicated to "the Right Honourable, the Lord F——g and the very facetious Mr. Foote." In a footnote it was said with reference to Sterne's intimacy with Archbishop Gilbert, then dead a few months: "The late archbishop of York, Dr. G****t of leaden memory, used to say, that he was so delighted with the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* that he read them once every six weeks." At the heels of Yorick's *Funeral*, came *An Admonitory Letter addressed to the Rev. Mr. S——, . . . by a Layman*, in wild censure of Mr. Sterne's literary morals; and *The Life and Amours of Hafen Slawkenbergius*, purporting to be the tale which Yorick had half promised in his fourth volume but had left untold. It was intimated by the *Critical Review*, that

Sterne bore a hand in some of these pamphlets, sending them forth, so to speak, as an advance guard to herald his approach.

Unaware of what awaited him, Sterne must have come up to London towards the end of November, a month before his custom; for the third instalment of *Tristram Shandy*—the fifth and sixth volumes—was advertised for Monday, December 21, 1761, though it bore the date of the new year. In this interval, while the author was correcting printers' blunders, occurred the only meeting that ever took place between Sterne and Dr. Johnson. "In a company where I lately was," the lexicographer is reported to have said to a group of friends, "Tristram Shandy introduced himself; and Tristram Shandy had scarcely sat down, when he informed us that he had been writing a Dedication to Lord Spencer; and *sponete suā* he pulled it out of his pocket; and *sponete suā*, for nobody desired him, he began to read it; and before he had read half a dozen lines, *sponete meā*, sir, I told him it was not English, sir."* The scene of the encounter was at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds. During the evening, it is said, Sterne displayed "a drawing too indecently gross to have delighted a brothel." Whereupon Dr. Johnson immediately left the room, and afterwards told Miss Reynolds that "he would rather give up the pleasure of her brother's society than meet such a contemptible priest as Sterne."† The lexicographer's criticism of Sterne's style, it has been supposed, was heeded; and thus by the irony of fate Dr. Johnson became, if not an actual corrector, at least a contributor to the good English of a man whom he despised. But Sterne, I fancy, let the dedication stand as it had been written, loose and ungrammatical as it was in structure from the Johnsonian point of view, and yet clear and beautiful to one who reads for the meaning and not to parse the sentences.

Sterne's early arrival in London was made imperative by the loss of his publisher. During the summer some misunderstanding had arisen between him and James Dodsley, the cause of which one can only conjecture, as no scrap of their cor-

* The *New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register*, December, 1818 (vol. X, p. 389).

† A note by Lady Phillipina Knight on the margin of a copy of the first edition of *Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson* in the Library of Princeton University.

respondence over it is known to be extant. The last instalment of *Tristram Shandy*, after its first great run was over, had not sold well, for there had been no edition since the one in May. Perhaps Sterne, in his disappointment, laid the blame upon his publisher rather than upon the public. Moreover, Robert Dodsley, with whom Sterne had begun negotiations for the publication of the first volumes of his book, was now thoroughly out of the business, and was devoting himself to literature. His brother James was quite another man. Whatever may have been the reason, author and publisher parted company in October, when Sterne took the unusual course of advertising his fifth and sixth volumes in the London newspapers without a publisher's name. Not till well on in December did any of these announcements bear the name of "T. Becket and P. A. Dehondt," at the sign of Tully's Head in the Strand, to whom Sterne transferred his patronage and remained faithful to the last. Becket, however, did not immediately purchase the copyright. Four thousand sets were printed at Sterne's expense, and the publisher was to sell them on commission.

Under the new management, the price of the set was reduced from five to four shillings, and advance copies were widely distributed to the press without much direct advertising. No great difficulty could have been encountered in matching exactly Dodsley's paper and type, so that the new volumes should present to the eye the same look as the old; indeed, they appear to have had the same printer. But the change of publisher was attended with one inconvenience. Every season spurious works in danger of being thought Sterne's were placed on the market by unscrupulous booksellers. Last January it was *The Life and Opinions of Bertram Montfichet*. Now it was another *Slawkenbergius*, which was timed to appear on the same day with *Tristram Shandy*, as a sort of supplement to be bound with it. Equally impudent was *The Life and Adventures of Christopher Wagstaffe, Gentleman*,—"a lively and facetious imitation of Mr. Sterne's famous performance,"—the hero of which claimed to be, in allusion to Sterne's plagiarisms from John Dunton, a grandfather of *Tristram Shandy*. So long as Sterne's books carried the imprint of Dodsley, there was no good reason for anybody's being deceived by the imitators and forgers; but the case was quite different when Becket

became his publisher. As a natural, though perhaps not quite necessary, precaution, Sterne went through the labor of inscribing his name in each set, usually near the top of the first page to the right, after the dedication to Lord Spencer. The signature caused here and there a smile or jest, for the last author to make use of this device, it so happened, was "the ingenious Mrs. Constantia Phillips" of scandalous memory.

Critics and moralists who had been lying in wait to pounce upon Sterne once more, were taken aback when they saw him step forth in a new and unsuspected character. Some of them, to be sure, who did not read the volumes, fell into the old abusive tone. A week after their appearance, Warburton, for example, who could scarcely have seen them, fired his parting shot at Sterne in a letter from Prior-Park to his friend Richard Hurd, afterwards Bishop of Worcester:

"Sterne has published his fifth and sixth Volumes of Tristram. They are wrote pretty much like the first and second; but whether they will restore his reputation as a writer with the publick, is another question.—The fellow himself is an irrecoverable scoundrel."*

No one who read agreed with Warburton. Garrick and other friends told Sterne that his "thought of the accusing spirit flying up to heaven's chancery with the oath" was sublime. The *Admonitory Letter* to which I have referred was declared by Sterne's old enemy on the *Critical Review* to be "founded on misapprehension." The critic was compelled, as a matter of business, to point out Mr. Sterne's gross faults and obligations to Rabelais; but my uncle Toby's oath, though a conceit, must be pronounced "a conceit of genius." Even the *Monthly Review*,† so bitter last year and still bitter enough, found the new instalment superior to all the rest, and printed entire the death of Le Fever as showing wherein lay Mr. Sterne's great excellence. Indeed, the story of Le Fever, it has been said, was copied into all the magazines and newspapers of the kingdom. Though the statement is not quite true, it nevertheless circulated very widely in this way. The *London Chronicle* set the ball rolling in its issue of December 19-22,

* *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate to one of his Friends*, 335 (London, 1809).

† *Monthly Review*, February, 1762; *Critical Review*, April, 1762.

and subsequently gave the passage describing “Corporal Trim’s Manner of Saying his Catechism.” *St. James’s Chronicle* for December 22-24 included quotations from it in an appreciation covering nearly three columns. And so we might go on to the *London Magazine* and the *Gentleman’s Magazine* for January, and to other periodicals of the winter which helped to spread Sterne’s good fame farther than it had yet gone.

Sterne had come to London, says his dedication to Lord Spencer, in “bad health,” which he attributed to hard writing, combined with preaching through the summer. He was hardly strong enough to carry on a flirtation whose incipient stages seem to date from the preceding May or June. The object of his sentimental regard was Mrs. Elizabeth Vesey, who lived at Lucan near Dublin, but passed her winters in London without her husband. The time came, though it was not yet, when everybody knew Mrs. Vesey, the famous Bluestocking, who brought her husband over from Ireland, got him into Dr. Johnson’s club, and established for herself a coterie in rivalry with Mrs. Montagu’s. Her “spirit, wit, and vivacity” quickly won Sterne’s heart. To Mrs. Montagu, who introduced them, he wrote: “In my life did I never see any thing—so truly graceful as she is, nor had I an idea, ’till I saw her—that grace could be so perfect in all its parts, and so suited to all the higher ordinances of . . . life, from the superintending impulse of the mind.” And to the “fair lady” who was known to her friends as “The Sylph” because of her perfect grace Sterne was writing a few weeks after he had first met her: “Let me ask you, my dearest Mrs. V., what business you had to come here from Ireland—or rather, what business you have to go back again—the deuce take you with your musical and other powers—could nothing serve you but you must turn T. Shandy’s head, as if it was not turn’d enough already: as for turning my heart, I forgive you, as you have been so good as to turn it towards so excellent and heavenly an object . . .” He would give, he told her, the last rag of his priesthood for a touch of her divine hand.

Sterne took Mrs. Vesey to Ranelagh, where they sauntered alone through the rooms while the crowd was in the gardens; and when too ill for that, he summoned a chair to convey him to her “warm cabinet,” that he might listen alone to her “gen-

tle, amiable, elegant sentiments," delivered "in a tone of voice that was originally intended for a Cherub." With Mrs. Montagu, they visited together the studio of Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom Lord Bath was then sitting for his last portrait. Sir Joshua was having some trouble with the old man, who at first wanted to be painted "half standing." But Sterne persuaded him to sit down in his chair, and then with the ladies began to amuse him so as to take the pain out of his face.*

Over-exertion brought on the most severe hemorrhage Sterne had ever had. His friends advised him to take a long rest. For some time indeed he had been thinking of going abroad; but he could not quite see his way to it on account of the expense—unless he could find a bear to lead round Europe. His serious illness now settled the question for him. As France and England were still nominally at war, though the fighting had ended, Sterne could obtain no passport for his safety. Somewhat concerned, he appealed to Pitt, who gave him letters to members of the French ministry, behaving, says Sterne, "in every respect to me like a man of good breeding and good nature." The Archbishop of York "most humanely" granted him a leave of absence; Garrick lent him twenty pounds for "some unforeseen expenses," and towards the end of the second week in January, Sterne started across the Channel in a race with Death.

Uncertain who would win, Sterne made a will in favor of his wife and daughter, and placed in the hands of Mrs. Montagu for Mrs. Sterne's benefit a sort of advisory testament dated December 28, 1761. In these "Memorandums left with Mrs. Montagu, In case I should die abroad," Sterne tells his wife where she may find his manuscript sermons, letters, and *Political Romance* (in his bureau and trunk at Coxwold, in his garrets at York, and with Hall-Stevenson), how much Becket owes him, how much is due him on his livings, and in fine how much his estate is worth. She is advised to sell his library and have Garrick invest everything for her, as he has already promised to do, in Government securities. His real estate he valued at £1800. Had Sterne died then there would have been altogether for Mrs. Sterne about £3,000. While writing out what might be his last words to his wife, he dropped two tears

* Blunt, *Mrs. Montagu*, I, 14.

Dec: 23. 1701 Memorandums left with Mrs Montagu, In case I should die abroad. at home

my Sermons in a Trunk at my friend Mr Hales St John Street. — 2 Vols, to be packed out of them — NB. There are enough for 3 Vols. —

My Letters, in my Bureau at Cox would be a Bundle in the Trunk with my Sermons —

Note. The large piles of Letters in the Garrets at Cork, to be sifted over, & in search for some either of Wit, or Humor — or what is better than both, — of Humanity & good nature — will make a couple of Vol. — and as not one of 'em was ever wrote, like Popes or Novices to be printed they are more likely to be read — if there wants ought to serve the completion of a Volume, — the Political Romance I wrote, w^c was never published — may be added to the foregoing end of the Vol. — The I have 2 Reasons why I wish it may not be wanted — first, an undeserved compliment to one, whom I have since found to be a very corrupt man. — I never knew him weak & ignorant — but thought him honest. The other reason is

Reduced facsimile of a page of the Memorandums left with Mrs Elizabeth Montagu

on the paper and, with his mind on another world, assured her that "we shall meet again."

Nobody expected that Sterne would live through the winter. The first intelligence of him that came back from France was the following item in the *London Chronicle* under date of February 2-4:

"Private Letters from Paris bring an account of the death of the Rev. Mr. Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*."

The sad news passed on from one newspaper to another, with occasional comment by correspondents. No sooner was Sterne supposed to be dead than all his faults were forgotten against him in the vivid impression left by his last beautiful volumes. An old soldier, for example, signing himself *A Plebeian*, who had been captivated by my uncle Toby, sent a letter to *St. James's Chronicle* for February 16-18, saying:

"I see there are letters in town mentioning the death of Mr. S——: I hope it is not true; but whether true or false, it is to be hoped no man, but one who can boast of a better heart and greater knowledge, will, for the future, ever employ his pen to sully the reputation of a man, who has given the world the greatest character that human nature can attain to."

Subsequently another *Plebeian*, who had read his namesake's communication, but did not know that the newspaper had already printed the episode of Le Fever, remonstrated with the editor in these words:

"I am surprised that you, who are capable of distinguishing what is worthy of the public notice, should have omitted thus long the inserting in your Chronicle the affecting story of Lieut. Le Fevre, from the last volume of *Tristram Shandy*. As a friend to society, as one who feels for the woes of another, and knows the force of example, I beseech you to insert it, when you have room for so long, but inimitable performance. Till I saw this letter, I was not so great an admirer of the author of *Tristram Shandy*, as to be displeased to see some of the dirt thrown at him stick to his coat; but this letter has made me a penitent convert, believing it impossible, that a man so capable of painting the lively impressions on his Uncle Toby's heart, on hearing an affecting story, can himself wear a heart that is not made of the best materials."

A few weeks later, "the report" of Mr. Sterne's death was

announced as “premature”; and a wit discoursed in verse upon it in *St. James's Chronicle* for March 6-9. The lines, catching the tone and movement of Sir John Suckling’s “What! no more favours? Not a ribbon more?,” ran on fluently:

“How! *Shandy* dead! (a well-bred lady cries)
 With him each grace, each social virtue dies!
 No more, alas! shall that instructive sage
 Expose to light the follies of the age;
 No more dear Satire through the nation reign,
 With *Shandy* fled to *Pluto's* drear domain.

* * * * *

Madame your sad solicitude dispell,
 Illustrious *Yorick's* still alive, and well!
 Th' ingenious writer yet again shall soar,
 On fancy's wing, to heights unknown before.
 The dire report which filled our minds with woe,
 Was, doubtless, raised by some illiterate foe.”

In the meantime the rumor of Sterne's death had reached York and Coxwold before any of Sterne's letters to his wife or to Lord Fauconberg. Whereupon his parishioners, wrote the steward of Newburgh Priory, all went into mourning out of respect to his memory.*

* *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, II, xvii (London, 1903).

C H A P. XII.

Reception in Paris. January—June, 1762

THOUGH still alive, Sterne had barely escaped the fate that was beginning to press upon him. The dread disease of his youth, which had been held in check since his college days, had broken out again to his alarm. The last hemorrhage left him so weak that, in his way of saying it, his “spider legs” could no longer support him; his voice was gone to a whisper, and his face was as pale as a dishclout. But hope at no time deserted him. “When DEATH,” he said, addressing his buoyant spirits in memory of the crisis, “knocked at my door—ye bad him come again; and in so gay a tone of careless indifference, did ye do it, that he doubted of his commission.” The unwelcome guest, nonplussed by his reception, turned from Sterne’s lodgings, saying as he went in apology for his intrusion, “There must certainly be some mistake in this matter.” “By heaven!” vowed Sterne, in a hoarse whisper across the table to Eugenius, as soon as death was gone from his door, “By heaven! I will lead him a dance he little thinks of—for I will gallop . . . without looking once behind me, to the banks of the *Garonne*; and if I hear him clattering at my heels—I’ll scamper away to mount *Vesuvius*.” Eugenius, one of Sterne’s names for Hall-Stevenson, who was with him in London, “led me to my chaise—*Allons!* said I; the postboy gave a crack with his whip—off I went like a cannon, and in a half dozen bounds got into *Dover*.”

At Dover awaited him a rough mid-winter passage across the Channel. While the sea chopped about with the wind in wild sport, Sterne lay in his cabin, “sick, sick, sick,” sure that death had him by the throat this time. He landed at Calais in the evening, and left early the next morning by post for Paris via Boulogne, Montreuil, Abbeville, Amiens, and Chantilly. He was too ill on the route to observe much, though “passing through the finest country,” and he seems to have slept or dozed most of the journey, except when aroused by some accident to the chaise or by the postboy’s demand for his fare at

the successive stages. We should not forget, however, Jana-tone, the beautiful daughter of the innkeeper at Montreuil, who greeted him as he stepped from his chaise on a fine evening, and whom he stood watching after supper, as she sat knitting "a white thread stocking, . . . long and taper," pinned to her knee, as if to say it was her own.

All the way, save for brief intervals like this, his imagination was haunted by Death, that "long-striding scoundrel of a scare-sinner" ever posting at his heels. If he were to be overtaken, he prayed that the encounter might take place at some "decent inn," away from the concern of friends. The inn must have been very bad at Abbeville, where he lay a night, for he ordered his chaise at four o'clock the next morning, that he might not meet the scoundrel there, of all inns in the universe. Thus travelling in haste from post to post, "a pale man clad in black" was driven into Paris on the evening of January 16 or 17, 1762, completely exhausted by the journey. The physicians whom he consulted told him plainly that he "could not live a month." At best the only hope they were able to hold out to him was a sojourn in the south of France for the winter. The man who sent the notice of Sterne's death to the London newspapers was only anticipating, as every good news-writer should do, an event certain to occur by the time his letter reached its destination.

But it was ordered quite otherwise. To the surprise of his physicians, Sterne mended so rapidly that by the time he was able to go south they all advised him to stay on in Paris for the present. His quick recovery he attributed not to their medicines, but to nature, who was allowed to work her cure in the clear elastic air of Paris, aided by novel sights and the attentions of a host of new friends. When first heard from directly, he formed one of a company of "fifteen or sixteen English of distinction" living with or near one another in the Faubourg St. Germain, a quarter of the city to which strangers usually resorted. They dined and supped together, occasionally attended the theatre *en masse*, and in smaller groups made excursions in and about the city. Among these gentlemen was George Macartney,—not yet Sir George,—"a handsome and dashing young Irishman," who was to have a long and honorable career as diplomatist and colonial governor. He had come

abroad as companion to one of Lord Holland's sons—Stephen Fox, a brother of Charles James Fox, the future statesman. Both of Lord Holland's sons were mere striplings. Stephen, though known as "the eldest cub of the Fox," was only seventeen years old; while Charles James, still a student at Eton, was four years his junior. It is almost incredible that Lord Holland should have wished to initiate his son into social dissipation so early; but such was his premeditated plan, and Macartney was chosen as his agent. With Macartney and Stephen Fox, Sterne made his first visit to Versailles; and the next morning Macartney introduced him to Monsieur Titon, an aged patron of art and literature, to whom Sterne had letters from Garrick. Mr. Fox took him for a week down the Seine to St. Germain-en-Laye for change and rest, and they often went together to the theatre. They usually attended the Comédie Française, close at hand, near the Boulevard St. Germain. The other theatre, the Comédie Italienne, which had just united with the Opéra Comique, was further away in the Mauconseil quarter. At the Comédie Française, Sterne saw and admired Clairon, Dumesnil, and Préville.

Préville, whom he saw in Boissy's *Le Français à Londres*, he declared to be "Mercury himself," so light was he in appearance and manners. Clairon he thought "extremely great," especially in *Iphigénie*; and Dumesnil "in some places still greater than her." He was invited to Clairon's receptions on Thursday, when the actress "gives to eat (as they say here) to all that are hungry and dry"; and before the winter was over he was admitted to the shrines of all "the best goddesses" of the theatre. For Garrick's sake, as well as for his own, he interested himself in all things dramatic, purchasing and sending to his friend comic operas and pamphlets on the stage, and trying to persuade him to bring out in London an adaptation of Diderot's *Natural Son* which had been made by "a lady of talents." But as time wore on, the French theatre and all matters pertaining to it lost their attraction for him. He was bored by the conversations heard everywhere over the comic opera, then at the height of fashion, and by passionate disputes over what should be done with the Jesuits—whether they should be tolerated or expelled from the kingdom and their property be confiscated. "O God!" he cries out in a letter to Garrick,

"they have nothing here, which gives the nerves so smart a blow, as those great characters in the hands of Garrick!—but I forgot I am writing to the man himself. . . . The whole city of Paris is *bewitch'd* with the comic opera, and if it was not for the affair of the Jesuits, which takes up one half of our talk, the comic opera would have it all—It is a tragical nuisance in all companies as it is, and was it not for some sudden starts and dashes—of Shandeism, which now and then either break the thread, or entangle it so, that the devil himself would be puzzled in winding it off—I should die a martyr——this by the way I never will."

Of the Comédie Française, where they performed mostly tragedies, Sterne soon grew tired because of the long moralizing speeches of the actors, saying he got enough preaching in his youth. "A tragedy," he tells Garrick, "is to be damn'd to-night—peace be with it, and the gentle brain which made it!" When he wanted to hear a sermon, he preferred to go and listen to Père Clement, preacher to the King of Poland, whom one of the parishes—St. Roche probably—had engaged to give "a dozen sermons" through Lent at a cost of 600 livres. A fine sketch of the dramatic orator he drew for Mrs. Sterne: "He is King Stanislas's preacher—most excellent indeed! his matter solid, and to the purpose; his manner, more than theatrical, and greater, both in his action and delivery, than Madame Clairon, who, you must know, is the Garrick of the stage here; he has infinite variety, and keeps up the attention by it wonderfully; his pulpit, oblong, with three seats in it, into which he occasionally casts himself; goes on, then rises, by a gradation of four steps, each of which he profits by, as his discourse inclines him; in short 'tis a stage, and the variety of his tones would make you imagine there were no less than five or six actors on it together."

Always keeping in touch with the English colony and its amusements, Sterne was drawn, within a fortnight, into the whirl of French society, where he reigned as the lion of the hour. It was his first London reception all over again, under clear Parisian skies. At the moment English newspapers were announcing his death, he was writing to Garrick in the elated tone of his letters from London to Miss Fourmantelle two years before:

"Well! here I am, my friend, as much improved in my health, for the time, as ever your friendship could wish, or at least your faith give credit to—by the bye I am somewhat worse in my intellectuels; for my head is turned round with what I see, and the unexpected honours I have met with here. Tristram was almost as much known here as in London, at least among your men of condition and learning, and has got me introduced into so many circles ('tis *comme à Londres*). I have just now a fortnight's dinners and suppers upon my hands—my application to the Count de Choiseul goes on swimmingly, for not only M. Pelletière (who, by the bye, sends ten thousand civilities to you and Mrs. Garrick) has undertaken my affair, but the Count de Limbourg—the Baron d'Holbach, has offered any security for the inoffensiveness of my behaviour in France—'tis more, you rogue! than you will do—This Baron is one of the most learned noblemen here, the great protector of wits, and the Sçavans who are no wits—keeps open house three days a week—his house is now, as yours was to me, my own—he lives at great expence. ——'Twas an odd incident when I was introduced to the Count de Bissie, which I was at his desire—I found him reading *Tristram*—this grandee does me great honours, and gives me leave to go a private way through his apartments into the Palais Royal, to view the Duke of Orleans' collections, every day I have time—I have been at the doctors of Sorbonne—I hope in a fortnight to break through, or rather from, the delights of this place, which, in the *sçavoir vivre*, exceeds all the places, I believe, in this section of the globe."

It should not be inferred that everybody in the French capital was reading *Tristram Shandy*. New to Paris, Sterne was yet to learn to make due allowance for French politeness in the many compliments paid to him as the author of a "famous book." *Tristram* was not translated until years after Sterne's death, and it was never very well understood in France. Still, the book was already known in a way. Anglo-maniacs here and there certainly had copies, which they tried to read—Voltaire with most success. For the rest, dependence was placed upon those French journals devoted largely to European literature, which did not fail to give *résumés* of *Tristram*, prefaced with anecdotes of the Anglican clergyman

who had written it to the dismay of his clerical brethren. The attention of literary Paris was first called to Sterne's book by the *Journal Encyclopédique* in the number for April, 1760, issued on the first of May. “*C'est ici,*” declared the London correspondent, “*le monstre d'Horace. Des pensées morales, fines, délicates, saillantes, solides, fortes, impies, hazardées, téméraires; voilà ce que l'on trouve dans cet ouvrage.* . . . *L'Auteur n'a ni plan, ni principes, ni système: il ne veut que parler, et malheureusement on l'écoute avec plaisir. La vivacité de son imagination, le feu de ses portraits, le caractère de ses réflexions, tout plait, tout intéresse et tout séduit.*” Garrick, it was added, had given the ecclesiastic the freedom of his theatre and a lord had presented him with a benefice. The same periodical also noticed the second instalment of *Tristram Shandy* in its issue for May, 1761, saying “*Toute le monde convient, après avoir lû cette brochure, qu'elle n'a pas le sens commun, et cependant on se l'arrache des mains; quelle inconsequence!*”

Sterne was likewise taken up by Suard, the journalist and man of letters, in the *Gazette Littéraire*; and Voltaire, who was then at Ferney writing his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764), quoted from Trim's sermon a passage containing the most subtle analysis within his reading of the insidious ways in which gain and lust may deceive the conscience. The portraits of Dr. Slop and the two Shandys, Voltaire thought “superior to the paintings of Rembrandt and the sketches of Callot”; while the “comic book” as a whole might be best compared with “those little satires of antiquity which contained qualities piquant and fascinating.”* Finally, Voltaire gave Sterne the title by which he was to be henceforth known in France; he called him, with Swift in mind, “the second Rabelais of England.” The information about Sterne that accompanied him through the salons was thus of that vague kind most apt to excite curiosity to see and converse with the famous author. He bore withal the credentials of Pitt and Garrick.

Sterne entered Parisian society, his letter to Garrick shows, through the salon of Baron d'Holbach, the Encyclopedist, who

* *Œuvres de Voltaire*, VII, 369 (Paris, 1876).

became his personal surety until a passport could be obtained from the ministry. D'Holbach, or the Baron, as his friends addressed him, was a cosmopolitan of large wealth, most simple and affable in bearing, and altogether the best type of gentleman under the old régime. He divided his year between his house in the Rue Royal, the very heart of aristocratic Paris, and Grandval, a beautiful château a few miles up the Seine, where he entertained favorite guests for days and weeks. Because of his hospitality towards all persons of distinction, whether French or foreign, he was known facetiously as "the host of Europe." When in Paris, he invited to his table, every Sunday and every Thursday, a company of philosophers and men of letters, numbering from ten to twenty. A lavish dinner, served at two o'clock, was prolonged by conversation until the hour for the theatre. The Baron's salon was aptly called by one who frequented it "the Institute of France before there was one"; for at his table were canvassed all questions in science, art, literature, politics, and religion. It was there, says the Abbé Morellet, who often dined at d'Holbach's with Sterne, that Roux and Darcey explained their theory of the earth; Marmontel set forth the principles of his *Elements of Literature*; and the host expounded his system of dogmatic atheism so clearly and persuasively as almost to win the assent of men who in their hearts could not accept his theories. On the other hand, Horace Walpole found the "Holbachian club" very dull. "I forgot to tell you," he wrote from Paris to George Selwyn in 1765, "that I sometimes go to Baron d'Olbach's; but I have left off his dinners, as there was no bearing the authors, and philosophers, and *savants*, of which he has a pigeon-house full. They soon turned my head with a new system of antediluvian deluges, which they have invented to prove the eternity of matter. The Baron is persuaded that Pall Mall is paved with lava or deluge stones. In short, nonsense for nonsense, I like the Jesuits better than the philosophers."* Sterne, too, with his imperfect knowledge of French, was at first restless under the long discourses of the savants, whom he was careful not to include among the wits; but, we may be certain, he never betrayed his impatience. He caught the Holbachian

* *Letters*, edited by Toynbee, VI, 370.

manner and was soon able to discourse in rivalry with the best of the circle.

At times four great intelligences shone in upon the Holbachian group. With the two greatest of them—Voltaire and Rousseau,—Sterne had no personal acquaintance; he may or may not have known the shy d'Alembert; but he formed an intimate friendship with Diderot, who was then, like himself, almost a member of the Baron's household. It was a delightful family as Diderot himself described it in letters to Mademoiselle Volland. Madame d'Holbach was a most agreeable woman, *douce et honnête*, with an aversion for her husband's and all other philosophy. There were several pretty children and a sprightly mother-in-law, Madame d'Aine, who knew and repeated all the current gossip and scandal. Diderot, when Sterne knew him, was midway in the *Encyclopédie*, a work which helped on immensely the emancipation of France from outworn dogmas and philosophies. Far apart as the two men were in their attitude towards existing institutions, the one a conservative and the other an iconoclast, they were nevertheless closely bound by intellect and temperament. Both were sentimentalists; both admired Locke, though they read the master differently; and both easily fell into buffoonery over their burgundy, to the delight, one may fancy, of old Madame d'Aine, who matched them jest for jest, while the modest Madame d'Holbach, "exquisitely dressed," sat and listened complacently to the wild and reckless warfare. It is a bit amusing to find the English sentimentalist complaining that Diderot's *Natural Son*, as he read it in translation, contained too much sentiment for his own taste, and so probably for Garrick's also. In memory of their friendship, the details of which have mostly slipped into obscurity, Sterne sent over to Becket for a box of books as a present to Monsieur Diderot. The box must contain, said the motley memorandum, the six volumes of *Shandy*, Chaucer, Locke complete, the drumstick edition of Colley Cibber, together with Cibber's *Apology*, Tillotson's *Sermons* in small volumes, and "all the *Works* of Pope—the neatest and cheapest edition—(therefore I suppose not Warburton's)." Poor Warburton! In return, Diderot honored Sterne some years after his death, by imitating and paraphrasing *Shandy* in a novel called *Jacques le Fataliste*.

At d'Holbach's, Sterne met, in the person of Jean Baptiste Suard, a young man who played about him as a sort of Boswell. Suard was born and educated at Besançon—the birthplace of Victor Hugo,—where his father held the post of secretary to the university. An incident of Suard's youth, as bearing upon his character, is worth telling. A mere boy just out of the university, he was summoned before the governor of Besançon as a witness against a companion who, after fighting a duel with an officer of the garrison, immediately went into hiding to escape punishment. Suard refused to betray his friend. He was himself consequently arrested and imprisoned for a period on the island of Sainte-Marguerite off the coast of Cannes, where, in want of other books, his time was passed in reading the Bible and Bayle's *Dictionary*. After the death of his father, the youth drifted to Paris, with a view to literature. He was befriended by Buffon and Madame Geoffrin, and more substantially by Panckoucke, the well-known publisher, whose gifted daughter he married. During these years, he learned English and acquired a very good knowledge of contemporary English literature. For a time he was associated with the Abbé François Arnaud on the *Journal Etranger*; and when Sterne came to Paris, Suard and his former colleague were projecting the *Gazette Littéraire*, a similar periodical under the auspices of the foreign ministry. At the same time Suard was also preparing for the press a *Supplément aux Lettres de Clarisse Harlowe*. Ten or twelve years later, he was elected to the Academy, largely through the influence of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. Suard lived on through the Revolution and the Consulate, translating many English books, and taking an active part in scientific and literary societies, especially in the reorganization of the Institute of France.

Suard, only twenty-eight years old when he first saw Sterne, was an impressionable young man, extremely polished in manner and very facile with his pen. Under the mask of his excessive politeness, however, was a keen intelligence and an independent judgment which could assert itself when necessary, as Madame Geoffrin found when she tried to check and direct his tastes. Boswell-like, he watched Sterne closely in and out of the salons, noting the peculiarities of his "comic figure," his gestures, and the turn of his phrases, whether English or

French; and for further observation invited him often to his house, where he was equally welcomed by Madame Suard. After Sterne had come and gone, Madame Suard wrote a most just and delicate appreciation of the *Sentimental Journey*; while Sterne's "habitual gestures and words were so engraven in the memory and imagination of her husband that he could never hear Sterne's name mentioned without believing that he really saw him and was listening to him."

Suard often said that he had never seen a man at all like Sterne—always courteous to a degree and yet perfectly frank in his criticism of the French and their ways, always in a sense the same and yet always at the mercy of momentary impressions. The Court went into mourning, and Sterne at once assumed the badge. He came into France with only a reading knowledge of French; but as soon as Fox and Macartney left Paris, he took lodgings in a French family, that he might honor his hosts by speaking their language, if not accurately, at least fluently. One night the whole fair of St. Germain—"a town in miniature"—burned to the ground, and "hundreds of unhappy people," who had lost their all, were driven from their booths to the streets in tears. The next morning, Sterne's barber, as he was shaving him, wept over the terrible misfortune to the poor creatures, and Sterne wept with him. Stopping one day before the statue of Henry the Fourth, on the Pont-Neuf, a crowd gathered about him, attracted by his peculiar movements. Turning round, Sterne called out: "Why are you all staring at me? Follow my example, all of you!" And they all fell on their knees with him before the King of France. A slave, says Garat, Suard's biographer, would never have rendered, unbidden, such homage to Henry the Fourth.

On one occasion, Suard asked Sterne to explain his extraordinary personality—a temperament really stable and yet volatile to all appearance. Sterne, in an unusually serious mood, readily complied with his friend's request, in a formal statement, which almost startles by its truth and relative completeness; for genius, it is supposed, never understands itself, and Sterne has said equivocally elsewhere that he could give a better account of any other man in the world than of himself. Whether the self-revelation took place over the wine at Baron d'Holbach's or when the two men were alone together, the

narrative does not specify. His so-called originality, Sterne declared, should be attributed "to one of those delicate organizations in which predominates the sacred informing principle of the soul, that immortal flame which nourishes life and devours it at the same time, and which exalts and varies, in sudden and unexpected ways, all sensations." This creative faculty, said Sterne, "we call imagination or sensibility, according as it expresses itself, under the pen of a writer, in depicting scenes or in portraying the passions." But beyond his natural endowment, must be considered, Sterne added, certain acquired traits affecting mind and style, which had come from "the daily reading of the Old and New Testaments, books which were to his liking as well as necessary to his profession"; and from a prolonged study of Locke, "which he had begun in youth and continued through life." Anyone, he told Suard, who was acquainted with Locke might discover the philosopher's directing hand "in all his pages, in all his lines, in all his expressions." In conclusion, he said of Locke's philosophy, which had thus tempered everywhere his thought and manner of procedure, in his *Sermons* as well as in *Tristram Shandy*: "It is a philosophy which never attempts to explain the miracle of sensation; but reverently leaving that miracle in the hands of God, it unfolds all the secrets of the mind; and shunning the errors to which other theories of knowledge are exposed, it arrives at all truths accessible to the understanding." Finally, it is "a sacred philosophy, which the world must heed if it is to have a true universal religion, a true science of morals, and which man must heed also if he is to gain real command over nature."* Sterne, of course, never talked quite like this, but this is the way he was understood by his French admirer.

Sterne's singular and piquant personality, together with his *bonhomie*, made him a welcome visitor everywhere. He edified philosophers by his clear and enthusiastic exposition of Locke; he entertained wits by his jests and droll stories; and awakened, says Suard's biographer, "new emotions in tender hearts by his naïve and touching sensibility." Among these tender hearts, may we include Suard's friends, Madame Geoffrin and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, whose salons ranked first for

* D. J. Garat, *Mémoires Historiques sur la Vie de M. Suard*, II, 147-152 (Paris, 1820).

intellectual brilliancy? We may, I think, and must. True, Sterne nowhere mentions these fascinating women, but for that matter he nowhere mentions his Boswell. A few years later, when the *Sentimental Journey* came out, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse wrote two short pieces in Sterne's style, one of which recites a signal act of charity on the part of Madame Geoffrin. Sterne is represented as listening to the pathetic tale and as being so overcome by it that he "clasped Madame Geoffrin in his arms and embraced her with ecstasy."*

As in this imaginary scene, Sterne always let his emotions run forward while he scampered on after them, whithersoever they might lead. "I laugh till I cry," he wrote to Garrick, "and in the same tender moments, *cry till I laugh*. I Shandy it more than ever, and verily do believe, that by mere Shandism, sublimated by a laughter-loving people, I fence as much against infirmities, as I do by the benefit of air and climate." In a similar vein ran a letter to Hall-Stevenson from his friend Monsieur Tollot, a gentleman of Geneva and an admirer of Rousseau, then travelling in France after a nervous breakdown. Falling in with Sterne at Paris, he was struck by the buoyancy of the pale and sick Yorick, in contrast with his own miserable temperament, which never let him forget his headaches and vertigoes. On a rainy day in April, when wind and rain were so violent that he was compelled to stay in and betake himself to divers glasses of Bordeaux in order to keep off the blue devils, Monsieur Tollot sat down and wrote to the master of Skelton, saying by the way: "I sometimes envy," to translate the Genevan's French, "the happy disposition of our friend Mr. Sterne. Everything assumes the color of the rose for that happy mortal; and what appears to others dark and gloomy, presents to him only a blithe and merry aspect. His only pursuit is pleasure; but he is not like most others who do not know how to enjoy pleasure when it is within their grasp; for he drinks the bowl to the last drop and still his thirst is unquenched."†

Perhaps Sterne enjoyed himself most in the society of

* *Oeuvres Posthumes d'Alembert*, II, 22-42 (Paris, 1799); and Garat, as cited above.

† W. Durrant Cooper. *Seven Letters written by Sterne and his Friends*, 21-22 (London, printed for private circulation, 1844).

Claude de Thiard, the Comte de Bissy, and in the coteries to which "this grandee" introduced him. The count, then forty years old, had behind him a conspicuous military career, in which he reached the rank of lieutenant-general. In peace he had devoted himself to English studies, translating Bolingbroke's *Patriot King*, which gained him admission to the Academy. Called in from the field, as the Seven Years' War was now really over, he was living at Court, with apartments in the Palais Royal. It was a graceful compliment that he paid Sterne when the humorist first called, by appointment, for aid in securing a passport from the Duc de Choiseul, the prime minister. *Tristram Shandy* lay open upon the count's table. Sterne afterwards played with the scene fancifully in the *Sentimental Journey*, substituting *Hamlet* for *Shandy*. But we may, I think, safely reconstruct certain parts of the conversation from Sterne's imaginative account of it. They talked of Shakespeare and of *Shandy*. The count was puzzled by Sterne's assumption of the name of Yorick, for which he could divine no reason. Sterne, reading the count's perplexed face, led him on into the notion that he was really jester to his Majesty George the Third, and at length disillusioned him humorously:

"*Pardonnez moi*, Mons. le Count, said I—I am not the king's jester.—But you are Yorick?—Yes.—*Et vous plaisantez?*—I answered, indeed I did jest—but was not paid for it—'twas entirely at my own expence.

"We have no jester at court, Mons. le Count, said I; the last was in the licentious reign of Charles II.—since which time our manners have been so gradually refining, that our court at present is so full of patriots, who wish for *nothing* but the honours and wealth of their country—and our ladies are all so chaste, so spotless, so good, so devout—there is nothing for a jester to make a jest of—

"*Voilà un persiflage!* cried the Count."

The interview was followed by the first of many invitations to dinner. One day the count enquired how he liked the French, and whether he had found them as urbane as the world gave them credit of being. Sterne replied that they were indeed polished "to an excess." His host, noting the word *excess*, asked him to explain frankly what he meant by the implied criticism. Sterne went on to say adroitly and politely that

courtesy, though in and of itself a commendable virtue, might lead to a loss of "variety and originality of character." To illustrate his hypothesis, Sterne took out of his pocket "a few of King William's shillings as smooth as glass" and proceeded:

"See, Mons. le Count, said I, rising up, and laying them before him upon the table—by jingling and rubbing one against another for seventy years together in one body's pocket or another's, they are become so much alike, you can scarce distinguish one shilling from another.

"The English, like ancient medals, kept more apart, and passing but few people's hands, preserve the first sharpnesses which the fine hand of Nature has given them—they are not so pleasant to feel—but, in return, the legend is so visible, that at the first look you see whose image and superscription they bear. But the French, Mons. le Count, added I (wishing to soften what I had said), have so many excellencies, they can the better spare this—they are a loyal, a gallant, a generous, an ingenious, and good-temper'd people as is under heaven—if they have a fault, they are too *serious*.

"*Mon Dieu!* cried the Count, rising out of his chair.

"*Mais vous plaisantez*, said he, correcting his exclamation.

—I laid my hand upon my breast, and with earnest gravity assured him it was my most settled opinion."*

Having once mastered the art of courtesy, the humorist easily outdid the French as he passed through the great houses to which his friendship with the count recommended him. Sterne and Choiseul met in one of the fashionable salons. The duke observing a group about an odd-looking Englishman and overhearing scraps of the conversation, turned to a friend and enquired, "Who the deuce is that man over there, that Chevalier Shandy?" On being told that it was the author of the bizarre book which he had heard of if not read, he stepped up to Monsieur Sterne, and a dialogue ensued which made Sterne "as vain as a devil." The duke subsequently signed a passport

* The essential truth of this anecdote is confirmed in an article which appeared in the *London Chronicle* for April 16-18, 1765, or nearly two years before the publication of the *Sentimental Journey*. Under the heading, "Foreign Literature," the newspaper gave an abstract of Suard on Sterne, from the *Gazette Littéraire de l'Europe*, in which the incident is related somewhat differently.

for Chevalier Sterne, remarking pleasantly, as he handed it to the Comte de Bissy, that *un homme qui rit ne peut être dangereux*. In return, Sterne begged that the prime minister be assured that he had not come into France to spy out the nakedness of the land.

On being introduced by the Comte de Bissy to the Duc de Biron, Maréchal de France, who, says Sterne, had formerly “signaliz’d himself by some small feats of chivalry in the *Cour d’amour*, and had dress’d himself out to the idea of tilts and tournaments ever since,” the duke expressed a wish to cross the Channel to see the English ladies. “Stay where you are, I beseech you, Mons. le Marquis,” broke in Sterne, forgetting the duke’s title, “——Les Messrs Anglois can scarce get a kind look from them as it is.” The duke invited Sterne home to a ten o’clock supper. In like manner, Sterne made the acquaintance of La Popelinière, the richest of the farmers-general, who, as described in a letter to Mrs. Sterne, “lives here like a sovereign prince; keeps a company of musicians always in his house, and a full set of players; and gives concerts and plays alternately to the grandes of this metropolis.” Instead of the English ladies, the farmer-general enquired about the English taxes, saying “They were very considerable, he heard.” Sterne admitted that the taxes of his country were considerable enough, “if we knew but how to collect them,” and made the gentleman a low bow. That evening Sterne received an invitation “to his music and table” for the season.

La Popelinière had a musical rival in Baron de Bagge, chamberlain to the King of Prussia. The baron was a melomaniac of large wealth, who fancied that he possessed great musical talent, though he could scarce play the violin. He came to Paris and opened a salon with an array of musicians, whom he paid to take imaginary lessons from him. It was not Sterne but another who once remarked to the baron that he had never heard anyone play the violin like him. Sterne found the baron’s concerts “very fine, both music and company.” The next night after attending one of them, he supped at the Temple, with the Prince de Conti, who lived there in great state, with a court of his own.

With much amusement Sterne studied the various feminine types seen in the salons, a summary of which he gave in a

sketch of Madame de Vence, said to have been a descendant of Madame de Sévigné. "There are three epochas," he observed in speaking of her, "in the empire of a French woman—She is coquette—then deist—then *dévote*. . . . When thirty-five years and more have unpeopled her dominions of the slaves of love, she re-peoples them with slaves of infidelity—and then with the slaves of the church. Madame de V[ence] was vibrating betwixt the first of these epochas." Seated upon the sofa together "for the sake of disputing the point of religion more closely," Sterne told her that, whereas it might be her principle to believe nothing, it was nevertheless a most dangerous thing for a beauty to turn deist, and thereby remove all those checks and restraints which religion cast about the passions. "I declare," says Sterne, "I had the credit all over Paris of unperverting Madame de V[ence]—She affirmed to Mons. D[iderot] and the Abbé M[orellet], that in one half-hour I had said more for revealed religion than all their Encyclopedia had said against it." Madame de Vence put off, as it turned out, the epoch of deism for two years.

"I remember," says Sterne further, "it was in this *Coterie*, in the middle of a discourse, in which I was shewing the necessity of a *first cause*, that the young Count de Fainéant took me by the hand to the farthest corner of the room to tell me my *solitaire* was pinn'd too strait about my neck—It should be *plus badinant*, said the Count, looking down upon his own—but a word, Mons. Yorick, *to the wise*—

"—And *from the wise*, Mons. le Count, replied I making him a bow—is enough.

"The Count de Fainéant embraced me with more ardour than ever I was embraced by mortal man."

Anecdotes must always be accepted with a grain of allowance. "I do a thousand things," Sterne wrote to Garrick, "which cut no figure, *but in the doing*—and as in London, I have the honour of having done and said a thousand things I never did or dream'd of—and yet I dream abundantly." The anecdotes that are here mingled with the narrative, however, are very much better authenticated than is the usual case,—some by Suard through his biographer Garat, and most by Sterne himself, who, of course, ornamented them after his own fashion. In paying the French in their own polite coin,



Laurence Sterne
From a reproduction of the watercolor
by Louis Carmontelle

Sterne came at times, as he felt himself, perilously near sycophancy. "For three weeks together," he said, shortening the period for artistic purposes, "I was of every man's opinion I met.—*Pardi! ce Mons. Yorick a autant d'esprit que nous autres.*—*Il raisonne bien,* said another—*C'est un bon enfant,* said a third,—And at this price I could have eaten and drank and been merry all the days of my life at Paris; but 'twas a dishonest reckoning—I grew ashamed of it.—It was the gain of a slave—every sentiment of honour revolted against it—the higher I got, the more was I forced upon my *beggarly system.*" But to go on. In one of the salons Sterne encountered Crébillon the younger, wit and novelist, author of *Les Egaremens de Cœur et de l'Esprit*. Before they separated, they entered into a comic convention. Crébillon agreed to write Sterne "an expostulatory letter upon the indecorums of Tristram Shandy" and Sterne was to reply with "a recrimination upon the liberties" in Crébillon's works. The two pamphlets were "to be printed together—Crébillon against Sterne—Sterne against Crébillon—the copy to be sold, and the money equally divided." The scheme miscarried, either because, as Sterne predicted, Crébillon was too indolent to perform his part of the jest, or because—and more likely—he was unable to read and understand *Tristram Shandy*.

Of all the prizes Sterne drew in the French capital, none pleased him quite so much as his winning the attention of Louis Philippe, Duc d'Orléans. Though only thirty-seven years old, the duke had already had a brilliant career in the army. At Dettingen a horse was shot under him. The war with England over, he had come in from the field, and was giving himself up, like other officers of rank, to pleasure and friendships, alternating his residence, with a strolling court, between the Palais Royal and his seat at Bagnolet. For his entertainment he kept in his household Carmontelle, to write novels and farces and to paint his friends at Court. Struck by Sterne's eccentric character, the duke requested the pleasure of adding, from Carmontelle's hand, the humorist's portrait to a favorite collection of small water-colors. Carmontelle drew Sterne in profile at full length, as he stood on the terrace of the Palais Royal, with the city and the dome of the Invalides in the background. Sterne turned his face towards the palace

gardens, and bent slightly forward as he laid his right arm across the back of a chair, half closing the hand. His left hand he thrust into a pocket, and threw one leg gracefully across the other. His spare figure was dressed faultlessly for the occasion in complete black, with ruffled lace-sleeves and lace-cravat tied loose, just as the Count de Fainéant had told him it ought to be. One misses the fine eyes of the front view chosen by Reynolds, but about the mouth are the same lines of mirth and good nature, with a trace of the full lips so conspicuous in the Ramsay portrait of Sterne's youth. It is the portrait of a man growing old in his labors and pleasures, taken, Sterne thought, "most expressively."

Sterne's original design of going south had been upset by the improvement of his health, and "the great civilities" of his new friends, from whom he found it hard to break away. So he decided to trail on in Paris until the end of May and then return home through Holland. But early in April came disturbing news from York. His daughter Lydia, who had suffered from asthma for several years, was declining so rapidly that her mother feared she could not survive another English winter. On receiving the alarming message, Sterne reconsidered his plans. For himself, his cheeks now rosy, he was ready to go back to his desk. And yet perhaps it would be better, after all, for him to summon his wife and daughter over to Paris and pass a winter with them at Toulouse, "free from coughs and colds." The faculty strongly advised this course for the complete restoration of his own health beyond likelihood of relapse. Sterne at once wrote to Lord Fauconberg and the Archbishop of York, explaining the situation, and thereby gaining their assent to an extension of his leave of absence from Coxwold. He was going, he told them, to the south of France, not so much on his own account as his daughter's, whom he was anxious to save if possible. But Sterne, as well as his physicians, had misread his condition. Near the middle of April, he went out to Versailles to solicit the necessary passports from the Duke of Choiseul. On his return, he was attacked with a fever, "which ended," Sterne says, "the worst way it could for me, in a *défluxion poitrine*, as the French physicians call it. It is generally fatal to weak lungs, so that I have lost in ten days all I have gain'd since I came here; and,

from a relaxation of my lungs, have lost my voice entirely, that 'twill be much if I ever quite recover it."

As usual, Sterne was soon out of bed as if nothing serious had occurred. But the season was passing and there were fewer engagements. When the curtain falls upon his five months of dinners, he was, as first seen, among his countrymen, doing honor to his Majesty George the Third. This was the last scene in the Shandy drama for the present. The story is told by the other chief performer, by Louis Dutens, the diplomatist, in his *Memoirs*. Dutens, though a Frenchman, had been at the Court of Turin for some time as *chargé d'affaires* for the King of England. On the appointment of George Pitt, first Baron Rivers, as Envoy and Minister to Turin, Dutens was ordered to Paris to take part in the preliminary negotiations for peace between France and England. He set out from Turin on the tenth of May, travelling in company with the Marquis of Tavistock, son of the Duke of Bedford—a young man only twenty-three years old,—and John Turberville Needham, the Roman Catholic scientist who had a hot tilt with Voltaire over the question of miracles. Needham was on the journey homewards, after making the grand tour as tutor to John Talbot Dillon, a young Irishman about Lord Tavistock's age, who will figure later as one of Sterne's close associates. Dillon, it may be said immediately for his further identification, spent most of his life in foreign travel and in writing about Spain and other lands he visited. Emperor Joseph the Second of Austria bestowed upon him the title of Free Baron of the Holy Roman Empire. On the anniversary of George the Third's birthday, the fourth of June, Lord Tavistock invited Sterne and a few other English gentlemen who were still in Paris to meet his Turin friends at dinner. Without formal introduction, as was the Continental way, the guests sat down to table. What occurred I may leave to the pen of Dutens himself, a queer character, who had done queer things at the Court of the King of Sardinia, vague rumors of which had doubtless reached Sterne:

"I sat," says Dutens,* "between Lord Berkeley, who was going to Turin, and the famous Sterne, author of *Tristram*

* *Memoirs of a Traveller*, II, 5-8 (London, 1806).

Shandy, who was considered as the Rabelais of England. We were very jovial during dinner; and drank, in the English manner, the toasts of the day. The conversation turned upon Turin, which several of the company were on the point of visiting: upon which Mr. Sterne, addressing himself to me, asked me if I knew Mr. Dutens, naming me. I replied, 'Yes, very intimately.' The whole company began to laugh; and Sterne, who did not suppose me so near him, imagined that this Mr. Dutens must be a very singular character, since the mention of the name alone excited merriment. 'Is he not a rather strange fellow?' added he, immediately. 'Yes,' replied I, 'an original.'—'I thought so,' continued he; 'I have heard him spoken of': and then he began to draw a picture of me, the truth of which I pretended to acknowledge; while Sterne, seeing that the subject amused the company, invented from his fertile imagination many stories, which he related in his way, to the great diversion of us all."

"I was the first," Dutens goes on to say, "who withdrew; and I had scarcely left the house, when they told him who I was: they persuaded him that I had restrained myself at the time from respect to Lord Tavistock; but that I was not to be offended with impunity, and that he might expect to see me on the next day, to demand satisfaction for the improper language which he had used concerning me. Indeed he thought he had carried his raillery too far, for he was a little merry: he therefore came the following morning to see me, and to beg pardon for anything that he might have said to offend me; excusing himself . . . by the great desire he had to amuse the company, who had appeared so merrily disposed from the moment he first mentioned my name. I stopped him short at once, by assuring him that I was as much amused at his mistake as any of the party; that he had said nothing which could offend me; and that, if he had known the man he had spoken of as well as I did, he might have said much worse things of him. He was delighted with my answer, requested my friendship, and went away highly pleased with me."*

* This merry jest was strangely employed by Thackeray to prove that Sterne was not a true gentleman, although he may be regarded as one by "my Superfine friend." It is perhaps worth while to quote the novelist's paragraph (afterwards suppressed), as an example of the way

in which Sterne has been often misinterpreted. After re-telling the story, Thackeray remarked:

"Ah, dear Laurence! You are lucky in having such a true gentleman as my friend to appreciate you! You see he was lying, but then he was amusing the whole company. When Laurence found they were amused, he told more lies. Your true gentlemen always do. Even to get the laugh of the company at a strange table, perhaps you and I would not tell lies: but then we are not true gentlemen. And see in what a true gentlemanlike way Laurence carries off the lies! A man who wasn't accustomed to lying might be a little disconcerted at meeting with a person to whose face he had been uttering abuse and falsehood. Not so Laurence. He goes to Dutens; . . . embraces him, and asks for his friendship! Heaven bless him! Who would not be honoured by the friendship of a true gentleman, who had just told lies about you to your face?"—*Cornhill Magazine*, II, 633.

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